

Caritas official wants Zambia to arrest Sudanese president

LUSAKA, Zambia – Zambia must hand over Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir to the International Criminal Court when he visits Lusaka Dec. 15, Caritas Zambia executive director Samuel Mulafulafu said.

Mulafulafu's comments came Dec. 8, a week before the opening of the International Conference on the Great Lakes Region to which Zambian President Rupiah Banda invited al-Bashir.

The court has issued an arrest warrant for the Sudanese leader on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity related to years of ethnic violence in the East Africa nation.

"The type of government al-Bashir is running is bad and is devoid of human rights," Mulafulafu said. "If President al-Bashir came to Zambia, the government must hand him over to the ICC.

"The Zambian government must support the arrest of al-Bashir because he is an international criminal," he added.

Banda's invitation has been condemned by groups such as Amnesty International, which described the gesture as an affront to the promotion of human rights.

In a letter to Banda, Amnesty International said Zambia would violate the Rome Statute, which created the court, if it ignored the warrants. Zambia is a signatory to the statute.

But Dickson Jere, Zambia presidential spokesperson, said it was premature to discuss al-Bashir's arrest because no confirmation has been received as to who would represent Sudan at the summit.

"Until we get confirmation, we cannot speculate on whether President al-Bashir will attend or not," Jere said.

Al-Bashir has in the recent past made trips to Doha, Qatar, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, and Kenya without any effort by the governments to hand him over to the ICC.

Despite 30 African states being signatories to the Rome Statute, most Africa Union nations have resolved not to support the warrant, allowing al-Bashir to freely travel across the continent.