

Sudan head accused of war crimes

Sudan's president has been accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Darfur by the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court.

Luis Moreno-Ocampo told judges at The Hague that Omar al-Bashir bore criminal responsibility for alleged atrocities committed over the past five years.

The three-judge panel must now decide whether there are reasonable grounds for an arrest warrant to be issued.

Sudan's government has warned the move will undermine peace process in Darfur.

The country does not recognise the ICC and has refused to hand over two suspects who Mr Moreno-Ocampo charged last year, Humanitarian Affairs Minister Ahmad Harun and militia leader Ali Kushayb.

It has also labelled Mr Moreno-Ocampo a criminal, and warned that any indictment could stall peace talks and cause mayhem in Sudan.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms this move by this criminal Ocampo

Abdalmahmood Mohamad
Sudanese representative to UN

The BBC's Laura Trevelyan at The Hague says that while some will welcome this move as a victory for justice, others fear it may spark further violence.

The UN estimates that some 300,000 people have died as a result of the conflict in Darfur since 2003, while more than two million people have fled their homes.

Sudan's government is accused of mobilising Arab Janjaweed militias to attack black African civilians in Darfur, after rebels took up arms in 2003 - charges it denies.

'Absolute control'

In a statement, Mr Moreno-Ocampo's office said he had submitted a report which concluded that there were "reasonable grounds to believe that Omar Hassan Ahmad al-Bashir bears criminal responsibility in relation to 10 counts of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes".

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Luis Moreno-Ocampo on the accusations

Mr Moreno-Ocampo said evidence showed that the president "masterminded and implemented a plan to destroy in substantial part the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa groups, on account of their ethnicity" when they rebelled against the government.

"His motives were largely political. His alibi was a 'counterinsurgency'. His intent was genocide," Mr Moreno-Ocampo said.

The prosecutor said pro-government militias, on Mr Bashir's orders, attacked and destroyed villages from the three groups, then pursued survivors into the desert.

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST BASHIR

Genocide:

Killing members of the Fur, Masalit and Zaghawa ethnic groups
Causing these groups serious bodily or mental harm
Inflicting conditions of life calculated to bring about these groups'
physical destruction

Crimes against humanity:

Murder
Extermination
Forcible transfer
Rape
Torture

War crimes:

Attacks on civilians in Darfur
Pillaging towns and villages

Those who reached the camps for the displaced people were subjected to conditions calculated to bring about their destruction, he added, with the president obstructing international assistance and ordering his forces to surround them.

"In the camps Bashir's forces kill the men and rape the women," he said. "I don't have the luxury to look away. I have evidence."

Mr Moreno-Ocampo said the president had prevented the truth about the crimes from being revealed and "promoted and provided impunity to his subordinates in order to secure their willingness to commit genocide".

"Bashir is the president. He is the commander in chief. Those are not just formal words. He used the whole state apparatus, he used the army, he enrolled the militia/Janjaweed. They all report to him, they all obey him. His control is absolute," he added.

'Disastrous'

On Sunday, thousands of people rallied in the Sudanese capital Khartoum to show their support for Mr Bashir and to denounce the anticipated charges.

[HAVE YOUR SAY](#) I strongly support the ICC's move, I do not want to see people dying anymore. Job, Sudan

Sudan's representative at the United Nations told the BBC that any charges against Mr Bashir would be disastrous for the security and stability of Sudan.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms this move by this criminal Ocampo," said Abdalmahmood Abdalhaleem Mohamad.

The ruling National Congress party meanwhile warned of "more violence and blood" in Darfur.

Mr Bashir said he had been angered by talk of his possible arrest, but added that it made him more determined to push for peace.

"This talk has angered us and prompted us to move this way. We will move forward, God willing. We are committed to remove the country from a crisis," he told state radio.

But a leader of one of the factions of the Sudan Liberation Army rebel group told the BBC it would welcome any action by the ICC.

"The regime in Khartoum committed a big crime... We think the ICC is going the right way," Abdul Khalil said.

Peacekeeping fears

Earlier, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon told the French newspaper, Le Figaro, that he was "very worried" about the possible impact of any indictment on peacekeeping operations and the political process, but added that "nobody can evade justice".

A UN spokeswoman said it had already raised the security alert level for its staff in Darfur. The joint United Nations-African Union Mission in Darfur (Unamid), which has 9,000 troops, has been struggling to contain the violence.

It has raised the security alert for its staff to "level four", which stops short of evacuating all staff, but relocates foreign workers who are not directly involved in relief or security operations.

John O'Shea, director of Irish aid agency Goal, warned the Sudanese government and its supporters not to seek revenge against international aid agencies and peacekeepers for the ICC's moves.

"Should the Sudanese government take that type of action, they're in a way shooting themselves in the foot," he told the BBC.

"The NGO community and the UN agencies have done a very good job in the context of looking after hundreds of thousands of vulnerable and desperately poor people."

The ICC was set up in 2002 as the world's first permanent war crimes court. Other international courts have previously indicted Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic and President Charles Taylor of Liberia.

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