

Letter to Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon Regarding Contact between UN Representative Gambari and Sudanese President al-Bashir

1 February 2012 Dear Secretary-General: Human Rights Watch was concerned to learn that Ibrahim Gambari, the joint African Union-United Nations special representative, attended the wedding ceremony of Chad's President Idriss Deby on January 20, 2012 in Khartoum, in the presence of Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir.

As you know President al-Bashir is subject to two arrest warrants issued by the International Criminal Court (ICC) for crimes committed in Darfur, including war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide. UN guidelines limit UN officials' interactions with individuals indicted by the international criminal courts, such as President al-Bashir, to "what is strictly required for carrying out UN mandated activities." (...)

(...) Discounting these guidelines brings the UN's credibility in disrepute and sends a terrible message to victims of heinous crimes in Darfur. Indeed, images of Mr. Gambari embracing President al-Bashir have been widely circulated, showing Darfuri victims that the head of UNAMID socializes with suspected war criminals. It is also reported that Sudan's defense minister, Abduraheem Hussein, also attended the ceremony; the ICC prosecutor on December 2, 2011 requested an arrest warrant for Hussein on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in Darfur. (...)

(...) The UN's guidelines seek to deny President al-Bashir, and others wanted for serious international crimes, the legitimacy that may come with such ceremonial interactions. UN officials should firmly adhere to them. We trust that you will formally raise these concerns with Mr. Gambari and take appropriate action to avoid a repetition of these events. (...)

Read the full letter

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