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REP. PAYNE CALLS INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT DECISION ON SUDANESE PRESIDENT EL-BASHIR 'A STEP TOWARDS JUSTICE FOR VICTIMS'

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WASHINGTON, March 4 -- Rep. Donald M. Payne, D-N.J. (10th CD), issued the following news release:

Today, the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant for Sudanese President Omar El-Bashir on charges of war crimes and crimes against humanity. This is the first time that the ICC has issued an arrest warrant for a sitting head-of-state. ICC prosecutor, Luis Moreno-Ocampo has accused President Bashir of using members of the state apparatus, the army and Janjaweed militia to carry out a campaign of genocide. For the past six years, President Bashir has caused the displacement of over 2.5 million men, women and children and has orchestrated the death of over 400,000 through the systematic murder, rape, torture, abduction and forcible transfer of the Darfuri population. Upon hearing the news Payne made the following statement: This is a step towards justice for the millions of victims that have suffered under this regime. Perhaps it gives hope to the six year-old children, born in the IDP and refugee camps, that one day they might know peace. Over the past two decades, the Bashir Government planned and executed genocide and crimes against humanity in Darfur, South Sudan, Nuba, and the East. In South Sudan alone more than two million people were killed; many of these victims were women and children. For the sake of peace and reconciliation, the people of South Sudan did not push for justice and accountability. This was an opportunity for Bashir to turn over a new leaf. Instead of learning from his mistakes, Bashir and his cronies once again planned and executed genocide in Darfur. There are those who assert that the issuance of an arrest warrant could trigger another war and damage the prospect of a peace agreement. However, denying justice and condoning impunity for the scant hope of peace is no peace at all. There can never be true democracy or lasting peace without holding the feet of those responsible to the fire. The millions of Darfuris who have been adversely affected by Bashir's puppeteering deserve justice. The many peace agreements signed with this regime over the past decade have not brought about a just peace in Sudan. The ultimate objective in Sudan should be to bring a just and lasting peace. For those who doubt the evil intent of the Bashir regime, you don't have far to look. Ask the people of Abyei what happened last year. Ask the people of Malakal what happened last week. Don't forget the millions in the displaced and refugee camps in Darfur and eastern Chad. For far too long we have allowed Khartoum to get away with state-sanctioned genocide. This move by the ICC gives hope that the world will no longer look away. I hope the Obama Administration uses this opportunity to push for justice and peace in Sudan.