

South African Lawyers Call for Arrest of Egypt's President Sisi

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A lawyers association in South Africa has filed an official request for the arrest of Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi when he arrives in Johannesburg on Friday to attend the 25th African Union Summit.

"We believe al-Sisi committed war crimes and crimes against humanity for the horrendous killings that resulted from the [2013] coup in Egypt," attorney Yousha Tayoub, a member of the South African Muslim Lawyers Association (MLA), told Anadolu Agency on Wednesday.

He said Sisi's upcoming visit would present a good opportunity for the South African authorities to arrest, investigate and prosecute the Egyptian president for his alleged crimes.

"We have overwhelming evidence proving that al-Sisi committed war crimes and crimes against humanity. We have presented our evidence to the authorities and are hopeful they will act," Tayoub said.

He added that Sisi should be given the chance to answer the charges against him in a court of law.

"There has been a lot of killing and persecution of members of [Egypt's] Muslim Brotherhood and its supporters [under al-Sisi's rule]," he said.

Tayoub noted that South Africa was a signatory to the Rome Statute, which formally established the International Criminal Court (ICC), which means that South African authorities can arrest anyone accused of committing genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes or crimes of aggression.

The Media Review Network (MRN), a South African advocacy group, likewise supports calls for Sisi's arrest upon his arrival in the country.

"The MRN reminds the South African government that the crimes committed by al-Sisi are universally condemned offenses," MRN spokesman Ibrahim Vawda said Wednesday. "War criminals are considered enemies of all humankind; our young democracy must not be seen as a safe haven for such criminals."

He said the South African government should conduct itself as a respectable member of the AU and a responsible member of the international community.

"Therefore, a quick resolution of this application [for Sisi's arrest] must be treated as a

matter of urgency," he said in an emailed statement.

It has yet to be seen, however, whether the South African government will take steps to arrest the visiting head of state.

A former military commander, Sisi is widely seen as the architect of the 2013 coup against President Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first freely elected president and a Muslim Brotherhood leader.

At the time, the South African government had vocally criticised Morsi's overthrow and the subsequent crackdown on political dissent waged by Egypt's army-backed authorities.

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