South Africa says it was not obliged to arrest al-Bashir

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By AP

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South Africa is insisting to International Criminal Court judges that it did not have to arrest Sudanese President Omar al-Bashir when he visited Johannesburg in 2015.

At a hearing Friday lawyers for South Africa said the court's founding treaty, the Rome Statute, does not oblige authorities to arrest heads of state of countries that are not members of the court, such as Sudan.

South African lawyer Dire Tladi told judges that "there is no duty under international law in general, and in particular under the Rome Statute, on South Africa to arrest a serving head of a non-state party."

ICC prosecutors have charged al-Bashir with genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes in Sudan's Darfur region, but the ICC has no police force of its own to arrest him.