



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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Governor Bill Richardson Secures Release Of American Held in Pakistan

Erick Aude, of San Diego, California Released From Pakistani Jail Today

Santa Fe: On November 10, 2004 Drena Erickson, of Rio Rancho and Sherry Aude met with New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson during his "open door session" in Albuquerque. The Governor's office is happy to report that Erick Aude has been released. "I want to thank the Pakistani officials for granting my request. While I don't condone violation of drug laws, it appears this was truly a miscarriage of justice. I am especially happy for Erick's mother. Her nightmare is over and her son is coming home for Christmas," Governor Richardson said.

Sherry told her story of her son who, she believed, was falsely imprisoned in Pakistan for drug trafficking and sentenced to seven years at a facility also used to house terrorist suspects. Sherry pointed out to the Governor that the man who had hired Erick to supposedly export leather goods, had testified in his trial that Erick knew nothing of the drug scheme and was innocent.

At the conclusion of the meeting, Governor Richardson reassured Sherry that he would help. And help he did.

The situation became even more urgent when it was reported that Erick had been beaten in prison because he was an American. Billy Sparks, Deputy Chief of Staff for Governor Richardson said, "I talked to Sherry today and she said, and I quote, "I owe Governor Richardson my life for what he did. When no one else would listen and all other efforts had failed, he did it," Sherry Aude said.

Governor Richardson contacted His Excellency Shaukat Aziz, Prime Minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, His Excellency Munir Akram, Pakistani Ambassador to the United Nations and Ryan Crocker, the American ambassador to Pakistan asking for Erick's release.

Governor Richardson and Ambassador Akram had known each other from Richardson's service as U. S. Ambassador to the United Nations in 1997. The relationship paid off and Erick was given another trial and released.

The Pakistani government notified the Governor's office on Tuesday of Erick's pending release and Erick's mother called today confirming the fact that her son was now free.

Governor Richardson has been successful in winning the release of American soldiers in North Korea, American prisoners held in Iraq during Saddam Hussein's reign, Americans held in Cuba and American Red Cross workers in the Sudan.