



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

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New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson to Meet with President of Sudan to Urge Release on Humanitarian Grounds of New Mexican and Two Colleagues Arrested for Spying

Wife of Journalist and Senior Vice President and Editor of the Chicago Tribune will accompany Governor to Sudan

SANTA FE, NEW MEXICO – Governor Bill Richardson will travel today, Thursday, September 7, 2006 to Khartoum, Sudan to meet with Sudanese President Lt. General Umar Hassan Ahmad Al-Bashir and urge him to release journalist Paul Salopek and two colleagues on humanitarian grounds. Governor Richardson will be accompanied to Sudan by Linda Lynch, Paul Salopek's wife, Ann-Marie Lipinski, Senior Vice President and Editor of the Chicago Tribune and Calvin Humphrey, a private consultant that has traveled with the Governor on similar trips.

Salopek was detained August 6 along with two Chadian citizens, Suleiman Abakar Moussa, Salopek's interpreter, and his driver, Abdulraham Anu. All three have been charged with espionage, passing information illegally, and writing "false news". Salopek, a two-time winner of the Pulitzer Prize, is on leave from his job as foreign correspondent for the Chicago Tribune on a freelance assignment for National Geographic magazine. When he is not traveling on assignment, Salopek lives in Columbus, New Mexico, with his wife, Linda Lynch.

"Paul Salopek is clearly not a spy. He's my constituent, and he is a talented and respected journalist who was attempting to do his job telling the story of the people, culture and history of the sub-Saharan region known as the Sahel," said Governor Richardson. "I will encourage President al-Bashir to recognize the essential role of journalists and a free press and release Paul and his colleagues on humanitarian grounds."

It was Salopek's wife Linda and Chicago Tribune Vice President and Editor Ann Marie Lipinski who first appealed to Governor Richardson for help. Following that request, the Governor met last week with Sudan's Ambassador to the United States, Khadir Haroun Ahmed, in Washington, DC, to discuss Salopek's detainment. This week the Sudanese government formally invited Governor Richardson to travel to Sudan and meet with President Al-Bashir.

"We are very grateful for Governor Richardson's willingness to help us in our mission to bring Paul back," said Linda Lynch. "We hope and pray for Paul's safe return. He is presently being treated well by the Sudanese

Government and for that we are very thankful. He is an incredibly passionate person who has a very deep love for Africa and its people.”

“Paul Salopek is one of the most humble and distinguished journalists that I have ever worked with,” said Ann-Marie Lipinski. “He has an amazing ability to really connect with the people he writes about and there is a stack of letters that I hope to show him someday from his readers and people that he has written about asking how they can help.”

The invitation to Sudan came about in large part because of the Governor’s long-term relationship with President Al-Bashir and Ambassador Ahmed, which dates back to 1996. In December of that year then-Congressman Richardson successfully negotiated the release of another New Mexican, Albuquerque pilot John Early, and two Red Cross workers. The three had been held hostage for 38 days by Sudanese rebels. In that situation President Al-Bashir and Ambassador Haroun supported Congressman Richardson’s efforts.

During his career as a Congressman, Ambassador to the United Nations, and Secretary of Energy, Bill Richardson has also helped to free Americans held prisoner in Iraq, Cuba and North Korea.

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