



State of New Mexico

Office of the Governor

Bill Richardson
Governor

News Release

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Bill Richardson Tours War-Torn Darfur Region in Sudan, Holds Meetings with Top UN Officials & Key Leaders of African Union and Rebel Forces to Push for Peace

Richardson to meet again with Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir Wednesday

EL FASHER, SUDAN- Governor Bill Richardson today saw first-hand the human toll taken by the ongoing conflict in the Darfur region of Sudan as he toured a relocation camp and spoke with citizens forced from their homes and villages by war. The Governor visited the As Salaam IDP (internally displaced persons) Camp in El Fasher, home to more than 43,000 people, mostly women and children.

“The spirit and character of these people in the face of such personal tragedy is remarkable,” said Governor Richardson. “When you realize there are 65 official IDP camps filled with hundreds of thousands of people, you begin to see the true extent of this crisis.”

Governor Richardson also received a briefing from top United Nations officials in Sudan and met with the Commander of the African Union peacekeeping forces, Major General Luke Aprezi. General Aprezi expressed his frustration that the relatively small numbers of AU troops cannot provide adequate security for the 65 IDP camps as well as serving as observers and running patrols to protect civilian activities such as gathering firewood.

“The AU urgently needs more troops,” said Governor Richardson. “It is difficult to find sufficient numbers of Africans to act as peacekeepers, so I will continue to push President Al-Bashir to accept a hybrid force that can truly make a difference.”

In addition, the Governor urged several field commanders from different rebel Sudanese forces to do their part to reduce violence against women and humanitarian workers and to undertake efforts to restore peace and stability to their region and throughout Sudan.

“From what we saw today it is clear the situation in Darfur is deteriorating at an alarming rate,” added the Governor. “Every group involved in this conflict, the rebels, the UN, and the AU, has an obligation to ensure the safety of humanitarian workers and protect women from becoming victims of sexual violence.”

Governor Richardson is scheduled to meet with President Al-Bashir tomorrow morning before returning to New Mexico.

“Our first meeting on Monday was positive,” said the Governor. “I look forward to meeting with the President tomorrow to try to make additional progress toward peace in the Darfur region.”

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