

Jimmy Carter and Lakhdar Brahimi in Sudan to support peace efforts

“Building confidence and constructive relations between Sudan and South Sudan is urgent” – Jimmy Carter

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Two members of The Elders, former U.S. President Jimmy Carter and former Algerian Minister of Foreign Affairs Lakhdar Brahimi, met President Omar Al-Bashir of Sudan in Khartoum today. The President spoke in detail with the Elders about problems in Sudan as well as between Sudan and South Sudan.

The Elders’ aim is to lend support to efforts to resolve current problems and encourage a return to dialogue between Sudan and South Sudan at all levels. They have expressed concern about heightened and dangerous tensions in the region, following weeks of serious clashes in border areas.

Today’s meeting with President Al-Bashir in Khartoum is part of a two-stage visit to Sudan and South Sudan. Members of The Elders will make a second trip to the region, including Juba and Addis Ababa, in the coming weeks.

Speaking in Khartoum, President Carter and Mr Brahimi welcomed the planned resumption of talks between Sudan and South Sudan in Addis Ababa this week under the auspices of the African Union.

The Elders emphasise that dialogue is the only way to resolve the current crisis, and they encourage the leaders of the two countries to meet directly.

Jimmy Carter, former U.S. President, said:

“We were pleased to meet President Al-Bashir to listen to his concerns and to encourage a return to dialogue. Lack of trust on both sides of the border has contributed to the recent escalation. Building confidence and constructive relations between Sudan and South Sudan is urgent.

“We urged President Al-Bashir to display the statesmanship that we know he is capable of, as demonstrated last year in the peaceful facilitation of the referendum enabling the independence of South Sudan.”

The Elders fully support Thabo Mbeki, Chair of the African Union’s High-level Implementation Panel (AUHIP), in his efforts to bring both sides back to the negotiating table to discuss outstanding issues, including oil revenues, the demarcation of the border, and citizenship for nationals of both countries. They seek to complement the efforts of the AUHIP.

Lakhdar Brahimi, former Algerian Foreign Minister, said:

“The economic impact of the current crisis in relations between the two sides is already being felt in the North and South, and unless there is some improvement, the suffering of the people will only get worse.

“Peace in Sudan has been a priority for The Elders since the group was formed in 2007. This is a very important part of Africa; what happens here affects the people of both countries, and has consequences for the region. We will continue to do what we can to support peace efforts.”

The Elders’ work on Sudan and South Sudan

In October 2007, shortly after The Elders launch by Nelson Mandela, they visited Sudan to highlight the human impact of the conflict. The Elders travelled to Khartoum and Juba to meet political leaders, including President Omar Al-Bashir and President Salva Kiir, UN and African Union officials and diplomats. In Darfur, they spoke to tribal leaders, women’s groups, civil society leaders and internally displaced persons.

Since then, the Elders have conducted private diplomacy and advocacy, speaking out at key moments, and supporting the AU High Level Implementation Panel (AUHIP) in its efforts to facilitate the resolution of outstanding issues between North and South. Members of The Elders visited Sudan in January 2011 as part of the Carter Center’s observation mission of the South Sudan Referendum.