

Darfur activists plan Beijing Olympics protest

BEIJING (AP) — Activists will demonstrate in Beijing during the Olympics to press China to help end bloodshed in Darfur, a group said, adding to the government's public relations headaches as it tries to quell protests in Tibet.

The announcement came as two U.S.-based groups re-

leased a report that accused Beijing of blocking efforts to compel the Sudanese government to end fighting in its western Darfur region.

"We are planning some actions during the games themselves in Beijing," Dream for Darfur's executive director, Jill Savitt, said in a conference call with report-

ers. Savitt said the group was keeping details secret "for fear we would not be able to pull off those events."

Activists are calling on Beijing, a diplomatic ally of Sudan and buyer of its oil, to help end fighting in Darfur. They have been pressing Olympics sponsors to lobby Beijing for action or face pickets at their headquarters or other protests.

In their report, Dream for Darfur and Save Darfur rejected Beijing's assertions that it has been trying to bring peace to the region.

They accused China, a permanent Security Council member, of blocking or weakening U.N. measures to compel Sudan to end the violence while supplying Khartoum with weapons.

"The actions of China, more than the actions of any other country besides Sudan, have facilitated the atrocities in Darfur," the report said. "For the past five years, essentially all of China's actions supported the government in Khartoum, thereby enabling the atrocities Khartoum committed."

China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs did not immediately respond to a request for comment. But a spokesman last week denied that Beijing has violated a U.N. arms embargo. He rejected a report that said China provided 90 percent of Sudan's small arms in 2004-06. He said Chinese supplied a small portion of Khartoum's weapons.

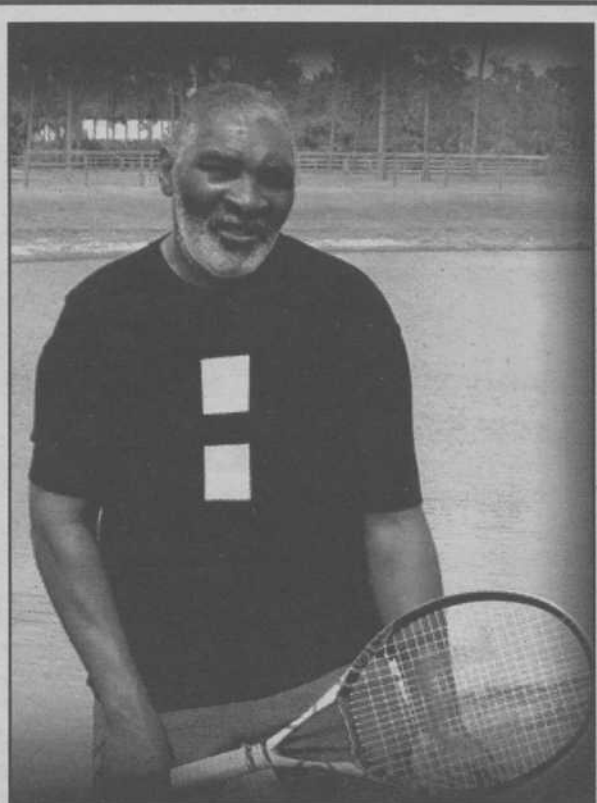
More than 200,000 people have been killed in Darfur and about 2.5 million people displaced in five years of fighting between African rebels and government

troops allied with Arab militia known as janjaweed.

China has invested in Sudan's oil industry and buys two-thirds of its petroleum exports.

Beijing insists politics should be separate from the Olympics, a prestige event that communist leaders hope will showcase China's economic development and boost their standing at home.

But they face the threat of disruption from protests over Darfur, Tibet, China's banned Falun Gong spiritual (See Protest, Page 11)



Richard Williams, father of Serena and Venus Williams, claimed that women's pro tennis is beset by racism.

Tennis CEO: Bias not issue on tour

INDIAN WELLS, Calif. (AP) — WTA head Larry Scott said that he strongly disagrees with comments made by Richard Williams, father of Serena and Venus, regarding racism on the women's tour.

Saying he was disappointed by Williams' recent remarks during an interview in India, Scott said in a statement: "The Tour has a zero tolerance policy when it comes to racism, and I have previously let Mr. Williams know that he should let me know if he ever had evidence of racist comments or acts in women's professional tennis."

While his daughters were playing earlier this month in Bangalore, India, where Venus reached the quarterfinals and Serena won the title, Williams told the Deccan Herald, "Well, I'm Black and I'm prejudice, very prejudice. People are prejudice in tennis. I don't think Venus or Serena was ever accepted by tennis. They never will be."

He said the media treated his daughters unfairly, that it was "the worst media job that they have done on any human being in the world," and that if he were Serena and Venus, he would have quit playing.

"But if you get some little White no-good trasher in America like Tracy Austin or Chris Evert, who cannot hit the ball, they (the media) will claim this is great," he said.

Scott said, "Champions like Chris Evert and Tracy Austin have done so much to help build women's tennis to where it is today, and it is regrettable that anyone would criticize them in this manner."

The Williams sisters haven't played at Indian Wells since 2001. They were booed after Venus pulled out of a semifinal match against her sister, citing knee tendinitis. Serena went on to win the title, but was booed during and after the championship match.

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