

## **AU Says Sudan Launches New Attacks on Darfuris**

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By Felix Onuah

ABUJA (Reuters) - Nigerian President and African Union (AU) chairman Olusegun Obasanjo said Monday AU cease-fire monitors had confirmed Darfur rebel reports that the Sudan government launched fresh attacks on civilians last week.

He made the comments during a meeting with representatives of the rebels and the Sudanese government, who were holding talks in the Nigerian capital Abuja to try to find a solution to the conflict. A full tape recording of his address to the two sides was made available to Reuters.

"The reported attacks by the government forces have been confirmed to me by the AU chairman of the cease-fire monitoring commission," Obasanjo said.

His comments came as a United Nations deadline expired for Sudan to provide greater protection to refugees in Darfur or face possible sanctions.

The talks, which started last week, have foundered amid accusations of cease-fire violations from both sides. Rebels have already staged a 24-hour boycott of the talks in protest at the attacks, which they say killed 75 civilians in six villages.

Up to 50,000 people have died since the conflict began in February 2003 and more than a million have fled their homes for fear of attack by Arab militia known as Janjaweed, who rebels and rights groups say have been mobilized by the government as auxiliaries to help crush the rebels.

Khartoum says the attacks on Darfuris were carried out by "outlaws" and it is not responsible for their actions.

Obasanjo said he had written a letter to Sudanese President Omar Hassan al-Bashir asking him to ensure all attacks on civilians by government forces and the Janjaweed militia stop to avoid undermining the peace talks.

The Sudanese government said Khartoum was already enforcing a cease-fire in Darfur.

"Actually the Sudanese government is enforcing the cease-fire agreement and does not need to be reminded to do so," Sudanese government delegation leader Majzoub al-Khalifa said.

The African Union is mediating in the talks, hoping for a political solution to the crisis which escalated in 2003 after years of low-intensity fighting between mainly African farmers and Arab nomads over scarce resources in the vast province.