

INTERNATIONAL

Cubans want reparations for U.S. hostility

Patricia Grogg

Special to Sentinel-Voice

HAVANA (IPS) — A coalition of farm, labor and student groups, together with political activist groups, are demanding \$181.1 billion in reparations from the United States for nearly 40 years of "hostile acts."

The claimants, who filed the lawsuit before a court in Havana early this month, are demanding that Washington pay damages for the deaths of 3,478 Cuban citizens and the disabilities of 2,099, whom they described as "victims of the aggressive (U.S.) policy" toward Cuba.

"All the hostile and aggressive actions carried out by the United States against Cuba, from the very triumph of the Revolution (in 1959) up to the present, have caused enormous material and

human losses," stated the claimants in the bulky file of documents handed over to the court.

The list of deaths included people killed in the 1961 Bay of Pigs invasion organized by the United States and Cubans opposed to the government of Fidel Castro, or deaths caused by dengue fever, allegedly introduced into Cuba by the United States.

The organizations that brought the suit were Cuba's central trade union, the National Association of Small Farmers, the Federation of Cuban Women, the Federation of University Students, the Federation of Secondary School Students, the Jose Marti Pioneers Organization, the Committees for Defense of

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Photo courtesy of Lou Richardson

A vendor at a Cuban street market sells fruit.

Security tightened in southern Nigeria oil city

LAGOS, Nigeria (AP) — Authorities tightened security in the southern oil city of Warri, fearing a new outbreak of ethnic violence during a visit last week by Nigeria's recently elected president, newspapers said.

Warri, the scene of sporadic street battles between warring ethnic militants, settled into an uneasy calm Tuesday afternoon after authorities ordered a shoot-on-sight, dusk-to-dawn curfew.

Later Tuesday, authorities extended the curfew to

between 6 p.m. and 10 a.m., the Lagos-based *Guardian* newspaper said. Truckloads of soldiers poured into the city, the paper said.

More than a week of fighting among ethnic Itsekiri, Urhobo and Ijaw communities has killed more than 200 and razed dozens of homes. President Olusegun Obasanjo is expected to visit the city later this week, officials say.

The fighting and the curfew have made life increasingly difficult for the citizens of Warri, a base for

many of the oil companies deployed throughout the oil-rich Niger Delta. The price of bread has tripled since the fighting began, and the price of beans and rice has also shot up, the *Guardian* said.

Fighting has erupted sporadically between the Itsekiri tribe and the much larger Ijaw tribe over government favors and oil revenues since 1997, when the military moved the tribal boundary, granting more land to the Itsekiri.

The destitute Delta region has been the scene of frequent

bloody clashes and is seen as a major challenge to Obasanjo, who took office late last month in an amicable handover that ended 15 years of military rule.

NAACP denounces aid disparity between African, Kosovar refugees

Special to Sentinel-Voice

Fueled by a May 21 *Los Angeles Times* article that reported the newly sprouted refugee camps set on Yugoslavia's border are much better staffed and equipped than those already set up in African countries, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People denounced the disparity in humanitarian aid given to Kosovar and African refugees.

NAACP President and CEO Kweisi Mfume said, "Food, shelter and supplies such as clean water and medical services should be dispensed to refugees based on need and not skin color."

Several factors ignited the response:

- The United Nations spends 11 cents a day per refugee in Africa compared to \$1.23 in the Balkans.
- There is one doctor for every 100,000 African refugees compared to one doctor per 700 Balkan refugees.
- Although 2,100 is the caloric count of food rations in both sets of camps, those in Albania eat pate, foil-wrapped cheese, fresh milk and oranges and ready-made meals with coffee and

fruit tarts while those in Africa receive grains such as sorghum or wheat to prepare meals from scratch.

- Clean water is readily available in the Balkans, yet on the Horn of Africa, in Eritrea families as large as 10 receive 3 1/2 gallons of water to last 3 days.

"The disparities are a monumental disservice to mankind and discredit the humanitarian aid efforts across the globe," NAACP Chairman Julian Bond said. "The fact that Yugoslavia rests in Europe's backyard should not obscure the basic fact that people are people and refugees in Africa want and deserve to be treated with dignity just as the Kosovar refugees."

Culture, logistics, race and the media were all reasons mentioned by various relief organizations for the stark differences in aid. Some said that European refugees are used to cappuccino and a higher standard of living to maintain their sense of dignity.

"Refugees in both continents are innocent victims of civil war and unrest. They should not be further victimized by subjective biased assessments that deprive them of basic food, water or shelter," Mfume said.

WORLD BRIEFS

INFLUX OF REFUGEES IN TANZANIA
THREATENS FOOD SUPPLY

NAIROBI (IPS) — An influx of refugees from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) into Tanzania is threatening the limited food stocks in refugee camps, according to the Red Cross. The number of refugees crossing over to Tanzania from DRC alone has reached 62,000 since August 1998, says the latest monthly report by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), recently made available to IPS. In May alone, there were as many as 12,000 arrivals. Fighting in the eastern DRC has intensified recently, with the Congolese government bombing the eastern rebel stronghold of Uvira for the second time in a month. This has prompted the Rwandese government to withdraw an earlier unilateral cease-fire. "There is an urgent need for funding them," said the Red Cross. The U.N. World Food Program, which is distributing food in the camps, says its field staff has had to implement a 20 to 30 percent reduction in food ratios due to the refugee pressure. "This couldn't have come at a worse time," says WFP representative in Tanzania, Irene Lacy.

1998 RECORD YEAR WORLDWIDE FOR
TEMPERATURES, STORMS, FLOODS

WASHINGTON (IPS) — Record high temperatures, coupled with increased numbers of storms and floods worldwide, made 1998 a year of extremes, according to the Worldwatch Institute. "This past year was an off-the-chart year," said Lester Brown, president of Worldwatch and co-author of "Vital Signs 1999," the Washington think-tank's annual report on global trends. Weather related damage world-wide, for example, totaled \$92 billion in 1998, up 53 percent from the previous record of \$60 billion in 1996. Record storms and floods last year drove some 300 million people from their homes — more people than live in the United States — the report said. Most of these people lived in China's Yangtze River valley, in Bangladesh, and eastern India. "Some were forced from their homes for only a few days, but others were out for weeks or months and some left permanently," said the 197-page report.

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