

5-8-1997

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### Recommended Citation

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## **U.N. Commission Condemns Cuba for Human Rights Violations**

*by LADB staff*

*Category/Department: Cuba*

*Published: 1997-05-08*

The UN Human Rights Commission, which met in Geneva in April, approved a resolution condemning Cuba for various human rights violations. This is the seventh straight year the commission has voted in favor of the US-sponsored resolution. The commission's report on Cuba's human rights record said there were 1,173 political prisoners in Cuba and that, although the number has declined in recent years, living conditions in the prisons have not improved. Cuban delegates responded that some of Cuba's laws that might result in political imprisonment are the result of "the exceptional situation" in which Cuba finds itself "living under a state of siege." Furthermore, they said that the motive behind the human rights accusations was frustration at Cuba's survival as "an alternative model to ferocious neoliberalism."

The resolution was adopted by a vote of 19 in favor, 10 against, with 24 abstentions. This was a weaker showing of support for the resolution than last year if measured by the doubling of the nay votes from five last year to 10 this year. Some delegates said the increased votes against the resolution came from a growing conviction that human rights is a bilateral issue between Cuba and the US and that the commission can do nothing through resolutions to change conditions in Cuba. "After seven years repeating this exercise, the commission ought to ask itself if the resolution really contributes to anything," said Arundhati Ghose, ambassador from India.

Chilean delegates, who voted for the resolution, complained that they were nonetheless uncomfortable with the "politization" of the issue. They cited as examples the appearance in the report of "ideological" elements and the inclusion of matters that have appeared in previous reports, such as the 1996 downing over Cuba of two civilian aircraft piloted by members of the anti-Castro exile group Hermanos al Rescate (see NotiSur, 03/01/96, 03/15/96, 07/19/96).

### ***Nicaragua sends anti-Castro Cuban to commission***

The presence among the Nicaraguan delegates in Geneva of Luis Zuniga, an anti-Castro Cuban, caused heated arguments between Nicaraguan and Cuban representatives. The Cuban delegation said Zuniga was a "known terrorist" and that the reason for his appointment as official human rights spokesperson for Nicaragua was the influence that the anti-Castro exile organization Fundacion Nacional Cubano Americana has on Nicaraguan President Arnoldo Aleman.

As an example, they claimed that Aleman's bodyguards were being trained by the CIA through links with the Fundacion and its leader, Jorge Mas Canosa. The Cuban delegates also said that Mas Canosa had contributed money to Aleman's presidential campaign in exchange for Nicaraguan support for the Helms-Burton Act and other international initiatives against the Cuban government. (Sources: Spanish News Service EFE, 04/10/97; Inter Press Service, 04/17/97; Associated Press, 04/24/97, 04/25/97; New York Times, 04/26/97)

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