

Castro Speaks on Rap Icon's Godmother

Written by Robert ID1347

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Cuban President Fidel Castro on Tuesday appeared to defend convicted police-killer Assata Shakur, saying the woman who fled to Cuba is innocent and a victim of persecution. Recently Assata Shakur has had the bounty raised on her by the United States Government. A reward of 1 Million dollars is now offered for the godmother of the slain hip-hop rap icon Tupac Shakur.

Castro did not name the woman, who changed her name from Joanne Chesimard, by name, but his remarks closely described the home state, background and circumstances of Assata Shakur who was placed on a U.S. government terrorist watch list on May 2.

Speaking in a lengthy televised appearance, Castro referred to her as a victim of "the fierce repression against the Black movement in the United States" and said she had been "a true political prisoner."

A New Jersey jury convicted the Black Liberation Army member of shooting state trooper Werner Foerster as he lay on the ground in 1973. She fled to Cuba after escaping from prison in 1979.

"They have always been hunting her, searching for her because of the fact that there was an accident in which a policeman died," Castro said, reflecting Assata Shakur's assertion that she did not shoot the officer.

Castro said the appeal for her expulsion had been raised with him several years ago by a woman who was both "a friend of Cuba" and a friend of then-U.S. President Bill Clinton.

"I transmitted my opinion to the president of the United States," he said, though he did not specify who the woman was nor when she visited.

He made clear the case involved New Jersey, saying that it involved the same state as that of former New Jersey Sen. Robert Torricelli.

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"They wanted to portray her as a terrorist, something that was an injustice, a brutality, an infamous lie," Castro said.

Castro suggested that the action was meant to divert attention from Cuba's demand that U.S. officials arrest Luis Posada Carriles, who is wanted in Venezuela on charges of involvement in blowing up a civilian Cuban jetliner in 1976, killing 73 people.

The Cuban leader called for a massive rally on May 17 in front of the U.S. Interests Section, or diplomatic mission, to demand the arrest of Posada.

Castro has held about 20 televised appearances over the past two months, many of them to accuse U.S. President George Bush and his administration of coddling terrorists and of claiming not to know where Posada _ a former CIA employee _ is hiding in the United States.

On Tuesday, he referred to Bush as "the little Hitler" and suggested he wanted to dominate the world.

Castro dedicated more than an hour to reading for Cubans a New York Times story about the Posada case and again listed numerous terrorist actions that Cuban officials attribute to Posada or his associates.

He even suggested that Posada and his friend Orlando Bosch might have ties to the 1963 assassination of former U.S. President John F. Kennedy.

"There are strange things, very strange, mixed up here," Castro said.