

prices have been falling since the third quarter of last year.

—Andrés Cañizález
Latinamerica Press

Haiti Situation Worsens, U.S. Blocks Aid Release

PORT-AU-PRINCE—U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell announced on February 7 that the United States would not release aid to Haiti which includes \$200 million in loans from the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB) approved in 1997 and 1998.

Two days earlier, the 14-member Caribbean Community's (CARICOM) heads of government had urged Haiti's international donors to release more than

\$600 million in suspended aid, saying this is the only way to keep the nation from sliding into even deeper poverty than now plagues this island of eight million people. "Failing that, it is going to be a catastrophe," Bahamas Prime Minister Hubert Ingraham told reporters at the CARICOM meeting in Belize City.

A CARICOM mission to Haiti followed just weeks after the Organization of American States (OAS) had censured Haiti and called for an independent international investigation of the December 17 burning of buildings owned by opposition parties and government critics. The fires followed an attack on the National Palace that the government of President Jean-Bertrand Aristide said was a coup attempt.

The opposition, however, said the violence was contrived to provide pretext for a crackdown against them. Several journalists were beaten, government supporters tried to burn down at least two radio stations, and at least 15 journalists sought political asylum in the United States, Canada, and France.

"The main pillars of democracy in Haiti are very weak, the police, the judiciary and the system of governance, and there is a climate of insecurity on the island," says St. Lucia Foreign Minister Julian Hunte, who headed the Caricom mission. The Hunte delegation concluded that Haiti, with its history of dictatorships and repressive regimes, is slowly becoming a basket case.

Up to 60% of Haiti's population is believed to be illiterate and about

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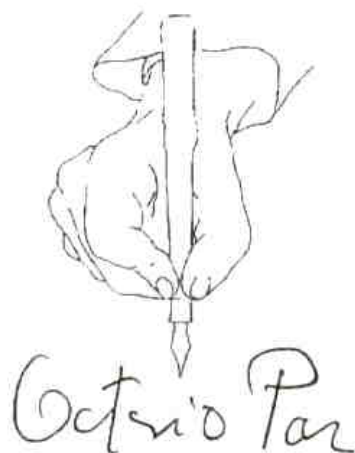
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65% is listed by the UN as living below the poverty line. Per capita yearly income is estimated at between \$400 and \$450, the worst in the hemisphere. The average life expectancy rate for women is 56 and for men, 52—also the lowest in the region.

Foreign-owned hotels like Club Med have pulled out. Caribbean-owned businesses like Capital Life of Barbados are doing likewise, claiming that the climate of fear and insecurity have rendered the country an unsafe place in which to do business. Key pieces of legislation, including annual budgets, are gathering dust in lawmakers' filing cabinets. Caribbean leaders say that unless some aid money is released to the government, all the arguments about the need for good governance will be undermined as government institutions break down completely.

—InterPress Service

been reported in the past three months in the state of São Paulo.

Daniel's body was found with 18 bullet holes in the back and the face. Most police investigators say he was kidnapped on January 18 by common criminals who planned to ask for ransom. But Luis Inacio "Lula" da Silva, honorary president of the PT and one of the leading candidates for the October presidential elections, with nearly 30% ratings in the polls, said that the murder of Daniel was politically motivated and premeditated.

Meanwhile, a group calling itself the Brazilian Revolutionary Action Front (FARB) has sent death threats by mail and e-mail to dozens of PT mayors and parliamentarians in the past two months. The FARB is an unknown group, and many doubt that it was actually responsible for the murder of Mayor da Costa Santos of

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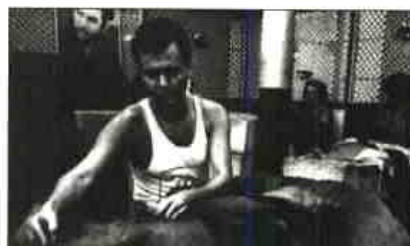
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Brazil: Workers' Party Targeted

RIO DE JANEIRO—The January 20 murder of Celso Daniel, one of the most prominent leaders of Brazil's Workers Party (PT), is seen as further evidence of a campaign of terror against the leftist party, which is given a real chance of winning the presidency in October. Daniel was the mayor of Santo André, an industrial suburb of 650,000 near São Paulo, Brazil's biggest city. He was also the coordinator of the group which is drawing up the PT program to be presented during the presidential campaign.

Another PT leader, Antonio da Costa Santos, the mayor of Campinas, another of Brazil's largest cities, was murdered on September 10. In addition, four other attempts on the lives of PT mayors and city councilors have



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could not be out of compliance with it. After September 11th, CUNY felt compelled to comply with the law.

In response, separate bills by New York State Assemblymembers Peter Rivera and Adrian Espaillat have proposed offering in-state tuition to anyone who had attended a New York City high school or who had earned a General Equivalency Diploma (GED) in the state.

—Robert Smith

Mexico: Indigenous Rights Law Revived

MEXICO CITY—In February, 168 members of Congress reintroduced the original version of an indigenous rights law that had been part of the San Andrés Peace Accords. The Accords were signed

six years ago between the government and the Zapatista National Liberation Army as the first step in an anticipated six-part negotiating process that was intended to lead to a comprehensive peace in Chiapas. However, the Ernesto Zedillo administration refused to push the agreed-upon law, which included constitutional changes presented by Cocopa, a congressional negotiating committee, through Congress. Last year the Vicente Fox administration pushed through a mutilated version of the reform law that was rejected by the Zapatistas and other indigenous groups.

Of the 385 Deputies who originally voted in favor of the watered-down version of the law, over 100 have changed their minds. In reintroducing the "Cocopa law," members from every political party except Fox's PAN have said it was an error to approve a law that was

nearly universally rejected by indigenous organizations. The Cocopa law would provide for indigenous autonomy, including respect for original languages and traditional forms of government, and control of natural resources. The indigenous rights law approved by Congress last year maintains most political controls in the hands of municipalities and state governments, and weakens the economic features of the Cocopa law. Negotiations between the Fox administration and the Zapatistas have been on hold since Congress approved the earlier law.

—Mexico Solidarity Network

Sources

Latinamerica Press is a bi-weekly publication of information and analysis about Latin America and the Caribbean.

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InterPress Service is an alternative source of news and analysis from a Third World perspective. IPS is a non-governmental organization structured as a non-profit International Association of Journalists.

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Robert Smith teaches sociology at Barnard College and is the author of many works on migration and transnational communities.

The Mexico Solidarity Network is a coalition of over 80 organizations in the United States and Mexico.

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