

"Cuban Five" Receive Nelson Mandela Award

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The award will be part of the struggle to release the three anti-terrorists that remain imprisoned.

The Geller Foundation, which is based in Philadelphia, granted the Nelson Mandela Award Wednesday to the "Cuban Five", three of whom are still prisoners in U.S. jails.

The group has been hailed as heroic in Cuba because they were defending their country from terrorist attacks financed by the U.S. government. They were unjustly convicted in the U.S. in May of 2001.

The award ceremony was headed by the director of the Center for Cuban Studies, Sandra Levinson, who highlighted the granting of this award to the Cuban Five and explained that this distinction is bestowed upon those who best exemplify the legacy of Mandela's struggle.

During the ceremony held at the headquarters of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP) in Havana, Fernando Gonzalez, one of the antiterrorists released last February, thanked the Geller Foundation for granting him the award.

"We accept this award as part of our commitment in the battle to bring back Gerardo Hernandez, Ramon Labanino and Antonio Guerrero," he said.

Gonzalez also said the amount of the prize - which has not been revealed - will go to the legal battle to free his colleagues so they can return to Cuba.

Meanwhile, Rene Gonzalez, the other anti-terrorist released, said that he was honored by this award and called to fight for the real legacy of Mandela's life.

"In that spirit, we have to keep fighting against the injustices that still exist, which are many and brutal like the Israeli aggression that is perpetrated these days against the Gaza Strip," he said.

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The ceremony was also attended by Mirtha Rodriguez, Antonio Guerrero's mother, who expressed her gratitude for this award "to the nobility of the cause of the Five." She also expressed her appreciation and endearment to these men for the "fair and just cause they defend."

The Cuban Five were unjustly imprisoned in the United States after being arrested by the FBI on September 12, 1998 and convicted in U.S. federal court in Miami in 2001, in a political prosecution by the U.S. government.

However, their actions were never directed at the U.S. government and they never engaged in nor planned any conspiracy.

They never harmed anyone nor did they ever possess or use any weapons on their mission. Their objective was simply to protect the Cuban people from U.S.-backed terrorism.
