

Diallo case leads to reform demands

■ The four acquitted officers could face federal charges.

NEW YORK (AP) — New demands for social justice, law enforcement reforms and a federal inquiry echoed from pulpits and city streets Sunday in the aftermath of the acquittal of four police officers in the shooting death of Amadou Diallo.

More than 1,000 people joined a peaceful prayer vigil outside the United Nations, where activist Rev. Al Sharpton hoped to bring the Diallo case to international attention.

The shooting victim "could have been one of these ambassadors," said Sharpton, who also said he was "calling for another jury to hear evidence" on the policies of Mayor Rudolph Giuliani.

"Come November, the jury is going to render its decision," he said, referring to Giuliani's probable run for the U.S. Senate against first lady Hillary

Rodham Clinton.

Some in the crowd wore signs reading: "Go ahead and shoot. I'm black so it must be justified."

In what was billed as a day of prayer, political leaders and activists joined Sharpton in criticizing the verdicts as inappropriate for a case in which police fired 41 bullets and hit the West African immigrant 19 times, only to discover afterward that he was unarmed.

The four officers, acquitted of second-degree murder and lesser charges by a jury in Albany on Friday, still face a departmental inquiry and possibly federal charges if Attorney General Janet Reno finds evidence that Diallo's civil rights were violated.

Sharpton's National Action Network is investigating what companies contribute money to the Patrolmen's Benevolent Association, which helped finance the defense of the four officers in the case.

Later this week, Sharpton will release names of the companies and will ask citizens to boycott the firms,

said his spokeswoman, Rachel Noerdlinger.

At St. Patrick's Cathedral, Auxiliary Bishop James McCarthy, filling in for an ailing Cardinal John O'Connor, told parishioners Diallo's death should cause people to "re-examine our own tendencies toward violence, toward fear and, perhaps, toward prejudice — racial prejudice at that."

City Council Speaker Peter Vallone, speaking at Harlem's Bethel AME church, said that to make sure Diallo's death was not in vain, the police department needed to continue to make "fundamental, meaningful change, so that people aren't afraid that the police are going to shoot them."

Norman Siegel, executive director of the New York Civil Liberties Union, told 200 parishioners at a Congregational church in Queens that the Diallo case was giving new impetus to his group's proposals for police misconduct reform.

The key provisions of the reforms would make federal and state funding

for local police contingent upon police meeting strict performance standards in community relations and would name a permanent special prosecutor to handle police brutality incidents.

In addition to seeking a criminal investigation to determine whether Diallo's civil rights were violated, Siegel said the NYCLU intends to sue the city on grounds that poor training and racial stereotyping led to the shooting.

Hillary Rodham Clinton urged New Yorkers not to let the verdict divide them. She said the case underscores the need for a police force reflective of the city's ethnic diversity and for "community policing."

Whatever the result of a Justice Department inquiry, "we must reach across those lines of mistrust and division and join to ensure that no tragedy like this ever happens again to anyone's son or daughter," she told several hundred people at a national conference of Dominican-Americans at City College of New York.

Boeing strike continues after failed negotiations

SEATTLE (AP) — Boeing engineers were back on the picket lines Sunday after contract negotiations between the company and their union broke down and a federal mediator left town.

No further talks were scheduled, and engineers and technical workers promised to keep picketing until a new contract agreement is reached.

At least 17,000 workers remained on strike over the weekend. The workers walked off the job Feb. 9.

The three offers Boeing has made show little movement, union officials said.

Talks between The Boeing Co. and the Society for Professional Engineering Employees in Aerospace (SPEEA) broke down Saturday, and C. Richard Barnes, the nation's top federal mediator, left town shortly thereafter.

"We kind of figured this might happen," said Geoff Lawrey, a software engineer and 12-year Boeing veteran picketing in front of company headquarters Sunday. "It would've been nice (to have an agreement), but nobody seriously thought it would happen."

Boeing spokesman Peter Conte said Sunday: "We came to the table with what we thought were viable alternatives. We thought SPEEA's counter-proposal was not viable."

SPEEA negotiators had sought more guaranteed pay raises and

bonuses similar to those received by the larger Machinists union. Boeing has insisted on mostly selective pay increases, reductions in life insurance benefits and increased health insurance premiums for employees.

While Boeing did not offer guaranteed bonuses, it did offer employee stock options. But the engineers on the picket line — many of whom know fellow technologists in Seattle's high-tech workforce — said the options offer was nearly meaningless.

The union said Boeing's latest offer this weekend was very close to its original offer on Nov. 11, which was near-unanimously voted down. The second offer, which was turned down by a slim margin, was made Jan. 13.

SPEEA contracts cover 22,600 employees in the Seattle area, California and Kansas, though the union has only about 64 percent of those workers as members.

Conte confirmed that Boeing has started to hire short-term contract workers to take over engineering and technical functions until the strike is resolved. He did not know how many contractor replacements had been hired.

The company delivered three more aircraft to customers on Friday, bringing the total deliveries up to nine since the strike began Feb. 9. In 1999, Boeing delivered 47 aircraft in the month of February.

Number of youths in prison doubles

WASHINGTON (AP) — The number of criminals under 18 serving time in adult prisons more than doubled between 1985 and 1997 as states steadily prosecuted more young people as adults.

By 1997, 7,400 youths 17 or younger were committed to adult prisons on conviction in either juvenile or adult courts. That's more than twice the 3,400 young people sent to the nation's state prisons in 1985, a new Justice Department report shows.

Seven in 10 young offenders who received adult punishment in 1997, the latest year state prison records were available, were convicted for violent offenses. Of that total, 37 percent were jailed for robbery, 13 percent for murder and 13 percent for aggravated assault, according to the report released Sunday.

Researchers say the young inmates by no means are overrunning the prisons' adult population of 2 million, and just 5 percent of all young offenders punished in this country serve sentences in adult facilities. But data suggest that today's violent young offenders are more likely to do prison time than in years past.

That's partly because of an increasing number of state laws that take away their legal status as minors and make them more accountable, researchers say. The crackdown, fueled in part by high-profile school violence, has placed children as young as 11 on trial in criminal courts.

"Many states have increased the number of provisions that allow juveniles to be handled in the adult system," said report author Kevin J. Strom, a researcher with the department's Bureau of Justice Statistics.

Based on state prison records

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researcher, Bureau of Justice Statistics

reported annually to the Justice Department, the report notes that while 37 states and the District of Columbia consider 18-years-olds adults for criminal purposes, most also allow "certain categories of offenders under 18 to be incarcerated in adult prisons and housed with older inmates."

The inmate data do not specify whether young offenders are convicted in juvenile or adult courts, but Strom said it is known that a small percentage go from the juvenile courts to adult incarceration.

The Justice Department study comes amid debate over the merits of meting out adult time for crimes committed by youths.

Historically, young offenders' fates mostly were decided by juvenile judges. But after a spate of drug-gang violence and school shootings in the last decade, state lawmakers decided adult prisons could deal more effectively with violent or chronic youth offenders.

Since 1992, 30 states and the District of Columbia have passed laws that in certain instances send young people directly to criminal court.

Through 1998, despite a 50 percent drop in the juvenile murder arrest rate, states gave criminal prosecutors increased power to bypass the century-old juvenile system or chipped away at options juvenile judges had for trying youth cases.

Youngsters' yearly admissions to prison climbed steadily between 1986 and 1995, then leveled off, the report said. Over the years, more youths were imprisoned relative to the number arrested. In 1997, 33 youths were sent to prison for every 1,000 arrests for violent crimes, up from the 18 imprisoned per 1,000 in 1985.

WEATHER

TODAY

Rain
high 60, low 40

TOMORROW

Breezy, showers
high 54, low 33

Daily Nebraskan

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Fax number: (402) 472-1761
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The Daily Nebraskan (USPS 144-080) is published by the UNL Publications Board, Nebraska Union 20, 1400 R St., Lincoln, NE 68588-0448, Monday through Friday during the academic year; weekly during the summer sessions. The public has access to the Publications Board.
Readers are encouraged to submit story ideas and comments to the Daily Nebraskan by calling (402) 472-2588.
Subscriptions are \$60 for one year.
Postmaster: Send address changes to the Daily Nebraskan, Nebraska Union 20, 1400 R St., Lincoln NE 68588-0448. Periodical postage paid at Lincoln, NE.
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World and Nation

Datelines

■ Nebraska

Student receives minor burns in dormitory fire

KEARNEY (AP) — A female student who lit a candle during a midnight power outage and then fell asleep suffered minor burns in a fire Friday at a University of Nebraska at Kearney dormitory.

Firefighters were called to the Centennial Towers West at 3:44 a.m. to a fire in a room on the seven-story building's top floor, Volunteer Fire Department administrator Ken Tracy said.

A lit candle in the room apparently blew over into a container holding paper and plastic, Tracy said.

The student woke up, attempted to douse the fire with a small trash can of water and then sounded the building's fire alarm.

The fire was extinguished within five minutes. Damage was minimal.

■ California

Two die in crash involving stolen ambulance

ANAHEIM, Calif. (AP) — An ambulance stolen from a hospital parking lot ran a red light at high speed and plowed into a car, killing two people, police said.

The woman driving the ambulance was "apparently disoriented and obviously not an employee of the ambulance company," Sgt. Joe Vargas said.

The ambulance had been taken from Anaheim Memorial Hospital, about a mile from the site of Saturday's crash. The driver was wearing a hospital identification bracelet, but it was unclear whether she was a patient, Vargas said.

The woman driving the ambulance was taken to Western Medical Center. She is expected to be arrested and booked for investigation of grand theft of a vehicle, Vargas said.

■ Mexico

Tijuana police chief shot, killed while driving car

TIJUANA, Mexico (AP) — Assaults shot and killed Tijuana's police chief Sunday, pumping more than 100 shots into his car as he drove along a busy highway.

Alfredo de la Torre, in charge of the police force in the violent border town since 1998, was pronounced dead at the scene, a spokesman said.

Torre was attacked as he drove home from Mass, unaccompanied by his bodyguards, the spokesman said.

Riddled with bullet holes, his black Chevy Suburban with tinted windows crashed into a palm tree on the side of the road, the spokesman said.

Government news agency Notimex reported that there were four assailants, but no arrests have been made.

■ Mozambique

Flooded African rivers leave more than 30 dead

SAVE RIVER VALLEY, Mozambique (AP) — Helicopters plucked more than 1,500 people to safety Sunday as swollen rivers swept away almost everything in their paths in flood-ravaged Mozambique.

Many more people gripped whatever high ground they could find as waters continued to rise in the Save and Limpopo rivers of this southeast African country, one of the poorest in the world. They have been stranded for a week and desperately need food.

Various reports estimated between 5,000 and 10,000 people are stranded, and more than 30 have died.