

Caribbean Politicians React to Death of Fidel Castro



Bridgetown, November 27 (RHC-CMC)— Caribbean politicians have praised the life of Cuban Revolution leader Fidel Castro, who passed away Friday evening in Havana and who sought to improve Cuba's relations with the rest of the region.

Upon learning of Fidel's passing, Prime Minister of Jamaica Andrew Holness wrote on Facebook: "The real Revolutionary. I pay my respects to the life and work of Fidel Castro and express the profound condolences and sympathies of the Jamaican people to the people of Cuba."

In a statement, Holness indicated that he had written to President Raul Castro extending deep sympathies on behalf of Jamaica.

"The Government and people of Jamaica join me in extending to you, the entire Castro family and the Government and people of Cuba our deepest condolences on this occasion," he said, adding Castro "will go down in the annals of history as one of the leaders who, though coming from a Caribbean island developing State, has had the greatest impact on world history."

President David Granger of Guyana said he was "deeply saddened by the passing of Fidel Castro," saying "his life was of significance not only to Guyana and the friendship that he had with Guyanese leaders, but also to the entire Western Hemisphere and to the world."

The Guyanese president added: "Fidel certainly transformed politics in the Western Hemisphere and we would like to express our solidarity with the Cuban people in that regard."

Trinidad and Tobago Prime Minister Dr. Keith Rowley in extending condolences to Cuba, said the 'passing of Fidel Castro marks an end of an iconic period of history not only for the Caribbean and Latin America, but the world."

The people of Trinidad and Tobago, and indeed many of our CARICOM nations, have long enjoyed cordial diplomatic relations with Cuba," Rowley said, noting that a letter had been sent to Havana, extending "our deepest sympathy to the Government and people of Cuba.

Prime Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, Gaston Browne said Fidel Castro will be remembered for his generous assistance to the Caribbean, this in reference to Cuba's scholarship programs and the opportunity Havana has provided for young people from the Caribbean and the rest of the world to undergo professional training in Cuban colleges.

"Scores of young Antiguan and Barbudans have become doctors, civil engineers, architects, computer science engineers, and other professionals because of the generosity of the Cuban people and leader Fidel Castro," Gaston Browne wrote.

"The world has lost a great man; the Caribbean has lost a fertile mind and a very worthy leader who was deeply loved by his own people," Prime Minister Gaston Browne said, noting that "after two decades of superb guidance, both Cuba and Antigua and Barbuda have a mature and warm relationship.

Dominica's Prime Minister Roosevelt Skerrit said Fidel Castro "was somebody who had a very long and positive impact on the entire world, having served for several decades.

"But it is not only about his longstanding leadership of Cuba that he is of note, but his generosity to the world and the impact which Cuba made on freedoms of many countries," Skerrit said.

Prime Minister Skerrit said flags will be flown here at half-mast on Monday until after the burial of the leader, who for many years defied the isolation policies of the United States and sought closer relations with the Caribbean.

Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Secretary General Irwin La Rocque noted that "Fidel Castro's commitment to assist developing countries through the sharing of his country's skills and expertise, made him a treasured friend of the Caribbean Community.

"Thousands of our citizens have benefited in many ways from his dedicated friendship to our Community, rooted in his appreciation for the courage of the then four independent Member States of CARICOM in breaking the hemispheric diplomatic isolation of his country in 1972.

"The passing of Fidel Castro marks the end of a life dedicated to fighting for the dignity of all people, which ensures his place in history," La Rocque added.

St. Kitts-Nevis Opposition Leader Dr. Denzil Douglas said Fidel Castro was "not only a friend of St Kitts and Nevis, but also a committed friend and comrade of the wider Caribbean region.

"There's no doubt that he will be greatly missed by members of PetroCaribe and ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America). Fraternity for his untiring efforts to improve the living standards of regional peoples and create greater lasting friendships among the peoples of the Americas," he added.

Trinidad and Tobago Opposition leader Kamla Persad Bissessar in paying tribute to Fidel Castro said that

his life, “his personal efforts at improving the lives of his people and his role on global stage have already engaged the attention of historians of different social and political stripes.

“The enduring legacy of the man who featured in some of the world’s most iconic dramas will no doubt live on in history and in legend,” she added.

Her Jamaica counterpart, Portia Simpson Miller, described Fidel Castro as a great leader and consummate friend of Jamaica, whose legacy will live on well beyond the 90 years of his life.

“One of the great honors of my life was knowing Fidel and I will never forget our conversations and his words of wisdom,” Simpson Miller said, adding that “through his efforts, today Cuba stands as a proud Caribbean beacon of quality education and training of an entire nation and a first-rate health care system, among other social advances.”

Former Guyana president Bharrat Jagdeo said Fidel Castro had always been helpful to Georgetown “even before the country gained independence and throughout all the years since Guyana had been an independent nation.

“It’s a sad day for the world. Fidel Castro was a statesman. He was an internationalist and because of his principles, he helped many developing countries particularly in the Caribbean and Latin America,” Jagdeo said.

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