

# WORLD LEADERS PAY TRIBUTE TO CASTRO

## CRITICS LABEL HIM A 'TYRANT'

**MOSCOW/CARACAS:** World leaders paid tribute yesterday to Fidel Castro, the Cuban revolutionary leader who built a communist state on the doorstep of the United States, but in death just as in life he divided opinion, and critics labeled him a "tyrant". Castro died on Friday aged 90, his younger brother and successor Raul Castro announced on state television.

**US President Barack Obama:** US President Barack Obama in a statement yesterday offered his condolences to Fidel Castro's family and added that history would judge Castro's impact on Cuba and around the world. "At this time of Fidel Castro's passing, we extend a hand of friendship to the Cuban people," Obama said. "History will record and judge the enormous impact of this singular figure on the people and world around him." Obama added that during his own presidency he had worked to "put the past behind us," while working on a future that was built on those things that were in common.

**Pope Francis:** The leader of the world's Roman Catholics sent a telegram saying he was "praying to the Lord that he (Castro) may rest in peace".

**UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon:** "Under former president (Fidel) Castro, Cuba made progress in the areas of education, literacy and health," the UN secretary-general told journalists.

**Russian President Vladimir Putin:** "The free and independent Cuba, built by him and his comrades, has become an influential member of international society and served as an inspiring example for many countries and people. Fidel Castro was a frank and tried and true friend of Russia. He has made a great contribution into establishing and developing of Russo-Cuban ties, close strategic cooperation in all the spheres," the Kremlin said, citing Putin's condolences telegram to Raul Castro.

**Former leader of USSR Mikhail Gorbachev:** Mikhail Gorbachev, the final leader of the Soviet Union which had long acted as an economic and political prop for Cuba, said Castro left a lasting mark on his country and on world history. "Fidel held his ground and strengthened his country at the time of the harshest American blockade, at the time of massive pressure on him," Gorbachev was quoted by Interfax news agency as saying. "Nevertheless he led out his country from the blockade to the path of self-sustained and independent development."

**Chinese President Xi Jinping:** Chinese President Xi Jinping said in a statement that: "the Chinese people have lost a close comrade and a sincere friend". Xi hailed Castro for his

contribution to the development of communism both in Cuba and around the world.

**French President Francois Hollande:** French President Francois Hollande mourned the loss of a major figure on the world stage and welcomed the rapprochement between Havana and Washington, while noting concerns over human rights under the Castro regime. "Fidel Castro was a towering figure of the 20th century. He incarnated the Cuban revolution, in both its hopes and subsequent disillusionments," Hollande said in a statement. "France, which condemned human rights abuses in Cuba, had equally challenged the US embargo on Cuba, and France was glad to see the two countries re-establish dialogue and open ties between themselves," added the Socialist party leader. Hollande met Fidel Castro in May, 2015 during the first ever visit by a French head of state to Cuba since the Cuban revolution.

**Spanish PM Mariano Rajoy** The Spanish prime minister sent his condolences to Cuba's government and people, via Twitter, where he described Castro as "a figure of historic significance".

**Indian PM Narendra Modi** India's prime minister sent his "deepest condolences" to Cuba. "May his soul rest in peace," he tweeted. "Fidel Castro was one of the most iconic personalities of the 20th century. India mourns the loss of a great friend."

**UK Foreign Minister Boris Johnson:** "The UK expresses its condolences to the government and people of Cuba, and to the former President's family. Fidel Castro's death marks the end of an era for Cuba and the start of a new one for Cuba's people. Fidel Castro's leadership of the 1959 Cuban Revolution marked him out as an historic if controversial figure. The UK will continue to work with the government of Cuba on a wide range of foreign policy priorities, including on human rights."

**EU Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker:** "Fidel Castro was one of the historic figures of the past century and the embodiment of the Cuban Revolution. With the death of Fidel Castro, the world has lost a man who was a hero for many. He changed the course of his country and his influence reached far beyond. Fidel Castro remains one of the revolutionary figures of the 20th century. His legacy will be judged by history."

**Venezuela President Nicolas Maduro:** In Venezuela, a long-time ally of Cuba and staunch opponent of the political stance of the United States, President Nicolas Maduro said Castro had inspired and would continue to inspire his country. "We will keep on

winning and keep fighting. Fidel Castro is an example of the fight for all the people of the world. We will go forward with his legacy," Maduro told television station Telesur by telephone.

**Bolivia President Evo Morales:** In Bolivia, where Ernesto "Che" Guevara died in 1967 in a failed bid to export Cuba's revolution, President Evo Morales said in a statement: "Fidel Castro left us a legacy of having fought for the integration of the world's peoples ... The departure of Comandante Fidel Castro really hurts."

**Ecuador President Rafael Correa:** Ecuadorean President Rafael Correa said: "A great has left us. Fidel has died. Long live Cuba! Long live Latin America!"

**South African President Jacob Zuma:** South African President Jacob Zuma had warm words, thanking the Cuban leader for his help and support in the struggle to overthrow apartheid. "President Castro identified with our struggle against apartheid. He inspired the Cuban people to join us in our own struggle against apartheid," Zuma said in a statement.

**Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau:** "A legendary revolutionary and orator, Mr. Castro made significant improvements to the education and healthcare of his island nation. "While a controversial figure, both Mr. Castro's supporters and detractors recognized his tremendous dedication and love for the Cuban people who had a deep and lasting affection for "el Comandante", Trudeau said in a statement.

**Vietnam PM Nguyen Xuan Phuc and President Tran Dai Quang:** In a letter to the Cuban people: "In the hour of this infinite suffering, the Communists and the people of Vietnam again reaffirm the solidarity and steadfast fighting spirit with the Communists and the Cuban brothers." "The bright life and immortal career of comrade Fidel Castro will forever live in the glorious revolutionary mission of the Cuban people and other nations striving to build a fair, civilized, democratic, prosperous and happy life."

**Syria President Bashar Al-Assad:** Assad said in a telegram to the Cuban leadership: "Cuba, our friend, managed under his leadership to withstand the strongest sanctions and oppressive campaigns witnessed in our recent history, becoming a beacon of liberation for the people of South America, and the people of the entire world. Fidel Castro's name will live forever in the minds of generations and will inspire those aspiring to true independence and liberation from the yoke of colonialism and hegemony." — Agencies



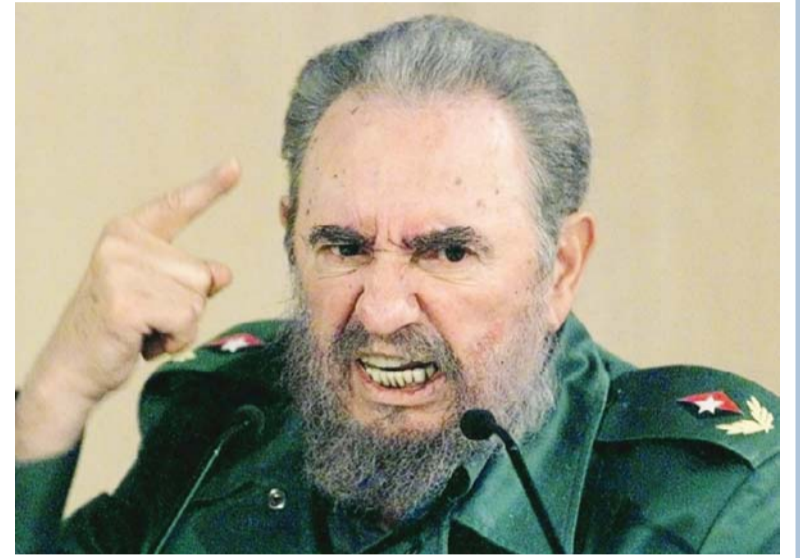
This file photo taken on Jan 26, 2001 shows Castro waving a flag during a visit to the Havana neighborhood of San Jose de las Lajas.

# TRUMP SAYS WILL DO ALL HE CAN TO HELP CUBAN PEOPLE

**WEST PALM BEACH, Florida:** US President-elect Donald Trump said yesterday that his administration would "do all it can" once it takes office on Jan 20 to help boost freedom and prosperity for Cuban people after the death of Fidel Castro. Trump had threatened late in his upstart campaign for the White House that concerns about religious freedom in Cuba could prompt him to reverse President Barack Obama's moves to open relations with the Cold War adversary after more than a half-century's estrangement.

Obama said this was an emotional moment for Cubans and Cuban-Americans and offered condolences to Castro's family. "At this time of Fidel Castro's passing, we extend a hand of friendship to the Cuban people," he said in a statement, noting his administration had "worked hard to put the past behind us." Republicans closely await what Trump - a billionaire businessman known for his unconventional approach to politics and policy - will do on Cuba once he takes office.

"Though the tragedies, deaths and pain caused by Fidel Castro cannot be erased, our administration will do all it can to ensure the Cuban people can finally begin their journey toward prosperity and liberty," Trump said in a statement issued from his West Palm Beach, Florida, resort where he and his family are spending the Thanksgiving holiday weekend.



This file photo taken on Sept 4, 1999 shows Castro gesturing in Havana as he discusses his request to the president of the International Olympic Committee for an investigation into the treatment of certain Cuban athletes.

"While Cuba remains a totalitarian island, it is my hope that today marks a move away from the horrors endured for too long, and toward a future in which the wonderful Cuban people finally live in the freedom they so richly deserve," he added.

At a Miami rally in September, Trump said he would roll back Obama's Cuban policy reforms unless Cuban leaders allowed religious freedom and freed political prisoners.

"The next president can reverse them, and that I will do unless the Castro regime meets our demands," Trump told supporters. A bloc of mostly Republican Cuban-American lawmakers has worked to keep tight restrictions on trade and travel with Cuba for years. Some Republican lawmakers broke with party orthodoxy to back Obama's reforms, drawn by the economic benefits of restoring ties.— Reuters



In this Nov 10, 1971 file photo, Castro (center left) rides with Chile's President Salvador Allende through a crowd waving communist flags in Santiago, Chile.

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