

Press Release

Václav Havel and other ICDC members send a letter to Raúl Castro

September 26, 2006 - Members of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) have released a letter to Raul Castro, the Temporary President of the Cuban Republic. Entitled *Transition, not Succession*, the letter expresses concern about recent changes within the highest power structures in Havana and insists on the right of the Cuban people to exercise their self determination through genuinely free elections. See the text of the letter below the press release.

The letter was signed by former presidents **Armando Calderon Fournier** (El Salvador), **Václav Havel** (Czech Republic), **Milan Kučan** (Slovenia), **Luis Alberto Lacalle** (Uruguay), **Rexhep Meidani** (Albania), **Luis Alberto Monge Alvarez** (Costa Rica); former prime minister **Philip Dimitrov** (Bulgaria) and former head of state **Vytautas Landsbergis** (Lithuania); Members of European Parliament **José Ribeiro e Castro** (Portugal), **Toomas Hendrik Ilves** (Estonia), **Cecilia Malmström** (Sweden), former minister of foreign affairs **Markus Meckel** (Germany); former member of parliament **Ferenc Köszeg** (Hungary); former dissident **Adam Michnik** (Poland); philosopher **André Glucksmann** (France) and Member of Parliament **Arnold Vaatz** (Germany).

The International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) is a gathering of prominent politicians and intellectuals founded by the former Czech President Václav Havel. The ICDC was created in reaction to the crackdown against the democratic opposition in Cuba in March 2003 and its aim is to promote democratic change in Cuba and seek support for the Cuban opposition. Members of the ICDC include Madeleine Albright, former secretary of state of the United States of America; Patricio Aylwin, former president of Chile; José María Aznar, former prime minister of Spain; Elena Bonner, former Soviet dissident; Arpad Göncz, former president of Hungary; Václav Havel, former president of the Czech Republic; Adam Michnik, former dissident and editor-in-chief of the daily Gazeta Wyborcza; and others. The secretariat of ICDC is based in People in Need. For more information see www.icdcprague.org.

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Mr. Raúl Castro Ruz
Vice-President of the Council of the State and of the Ministers
Temporary President of the Cuban Republic

September 25, 2006

TRANSITION NOT SUCCESSION

We, the undersigned members of the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC), are very concerned about the situation on the island, given the recent developments. We have recently seen a transfer of power from Fidel Castro to his brother Raul Castro and other Cuban regime leaders. Although temporary, this move signals a change on the island. This change may have been expected by the Cuban people, but they have not been permitted to participate in the decision.

Many prominent international democratic leaders, some of them members of the ICDC, have expressed their concern about recent changes within the highest power structures in Havana and have insisted on the right of the Cuban people to exercise their self determination through genuinely free elections.

In the Declaration of Viña del Mar on democracy and governance, signed in 1996 by all heads of states of the Iberoamerican region, Fidel Castro as head of state committed himself to guarantee all liberties of a democratic nation to his citizens. However, Cuba is currently the only country in Latin America where citizens cannot exercise their sovereign and universal right to elect their political representation through free elections. The inevitable departure of Fidel Castro could act as the catalyst for change.

Those now in power in Cuba have an opportunity to end the island's estrangement from the international community and the state of tension and conflict existing within Cuban society. The unconditional release of all Cuba's political prisoners, the legalization of opposition political parties and civil society institutions and free multiparty elections are steps that would be greatly welcomed by the entire international community.

Armando Calderon Sól, El Salvador, former president
José Ribeiro e Castro, Portugal, Member of European Parliament
Philip Dimitrov, Bulgaria, former prime minister
André Glucksmann, France, philosopher
Václav Havel, Czech Republic, former president
Toomas Hendrik Ilves, Estonia, Member of the European Parliament
Ferenc Kőszeg, Hungary, former member of the Parliament
Milan Kučan, Slovenia, former president
Luis Alberto Lacalle, Uruguay, former president
Vytautas Landsbergis, Lithuania, former head of state
Cecilia Malmström, Sweden, Member of the European Parliament
Markus Meckel, Germany, former minister of foreign affairs, GDR 1990
Rexhep Meidani, Albania, former president
Adam Michnik, Poland, former dissident and editor-in-chief of the daily Gazeta Wyborcza
Luis Alberto Monge Alvarez, Costa Rica, former president
Arnold Vaatz, Germany, Member of Parliament