

Cuba: Hope emerges with collective strength after Hurricane Ian

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President Diaz-Canel in Pinar del Rio.

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On September 26, Cuba was hit by Hurricane Ian, which didn't stop intensifying as it passed through the western part of the island where it hovered for hours. There it left a trail of pain and disaster in those areas that were very close to its center and in most of the territory that were hit by its bands of hurricane-force winds. Thousands of people were left in the dark after it knocked down trees and electric poles and caused failures in the main thermo electric plants of the country.

Two people lost their lives, thousands had to be evacuated, many others couldn't return because the wind had blown down their homes leaving only debris. But at the exact moment when Ian ceased to be an imminent danger the people began raising their communities from the devastation with urgency, determination and resilience that characterizes the Cuban people. There was no time to lose.

One week after Ian's devastating passage, the island continues its recovery already with great progress. The cities have almost completely regained a semblance of normalcy, although with many missing trees. Most of the communities that were left in darkness now have electricity and water services back.

Recovery is taking place in record time, considering the dimensions of the damage. Let's highlight the fact that all of Cuba had zero electricity being generated on the night of September 27.

This rebound has been made possible thanks to countless anonymous heroes, like the linemen who worked from the heights to tie downed cables, putting their own lives at risk; or specialists from the country's thermo electric plants, who struggled day and night to start up those mechanical beasts; or the neighbors who cleared the streets of fallen trees with axes, saws and their shoulders.

There were many other heroes, like those who offered their few resources to help the helpless, offering them a space in their refrigerators to cool their food; and the directors of medical institutions who allowed citizens to recharge their cell phones, which are, for many, their only means of communication.

But, above all, it has been admirable how the country's authorities have not left the people alone even for a minute. President Miguel Díaz-Canel has been seen visiting the areas most affected by the hurricane, especially in the western part of the country.

This Monday, he went to Cocodrilo, a fishing community located on the Isle of Youth, where he got to see that all of its neighbors are involved in the recovery efforts. There, he spoke of rebuilding houses as beautiful as the environment, one of the most unique distinctions of that Cuban municipality. He made it clear that not only did they need to rebuild their homes but they had to be made better than before.

This is not the only trip made by the president. In just one week, he has visited most of the territories hardest hit by Ian in Pinar del Rio, where he got to see the pain of those who lost everything, and assured them they were not alone. This was not a president making token visits but one who is immersed in the process.

He also spoke through various media to the citizens who took to the streets in frustration due to the blackouts, the lack of water, and the loss of food that couldn't be preserved in their refrigerators.

"All together, we will get out of this situation. It is understandable that citizens are upset about the damage left by Ian, but we are working tirelessly to solve the problems," he said.

During a meeting with the country's main authorities at the Palace of the Revolution, Diaz-Canel talked about the importance of people feeling accompanied by their

leaders. “We have to reach all communities, he emphasized, especially the most remote ones and those that still remain without electrical service. We have to offer daily information on how the repair work is going in each community.”

This empathy is just one of the things missing for those affected by Hurricane Ian in Florida, where the death toll is well over a hundred due in part to the fact that state and local officials did not issue an evacuation notice until the storm was less than 24 hours away and even then there was no coordinated plan of how and where to go. Thousands of people are still without electricity, stores are out of supplies, and there is no hope of solutions in an atmosphere of uncertainty.

“We are tired, dirty and hungry. Hurricane Ian Survivors leave Fort Myers on Foot”, reads a Miami Herald headline. One citizen told that newspaper, “We’re alive. That makes us luckier than some of our neighbors.” Tragically the death toll in Florida continues to rise.

In Cuba, we feel confident because no one will be left behind. The people’s concerns will be heard, as long as they are expressed in a peaceful and civic manner. We approach disasters and recovery collectively and in every corner of the country where devastation and pain remain, hope will re-surge with new strength.

Source: [Resumen Latinoamericano - US](#)

