Cuban Exiles Ask Canadians to Stop Supporting the Cuban Regime: “Tourism Dollars Finance Repression”

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MIAMI, United States. – Pro-democracy activists and members of the Cuban exile community called on the Canadian government and Canadian citizens to stop supporting the Cuban regime as part of the campaign “Unlock Cuba”, an initiative that aims to shed light on repressive practices and human rights violations in the island.

At a press conference held today in Toronto, Canada, activists explained how the regime utilizes dollars generated by several sectors of the economy, like tourism, to maintain its repressive apparatus against the Cuban people.

“Cubans, like Canadians and everyone else in the world, deserve universal rights
and freedoms. We are convinced that this is the right moment for Canadians to consider small but concrete actions they can take in order to help the Cuban people find its freedom,” stated Orlando Gutiérrez Boronat, coordinator of the Assembly of the Cuban Resistance (Asamblea de la Resistencia Cubana, ARC by its Spanish acronym).

Gutiérrez Boronat recalled that “year after year, decade after decade, the Cuban regime has ruled over our people and has done so with the financial help of individuals, companies and even governments that are not aware of the realities in the island.”

Canadian tourism represents more than 40% of the total visitors the Cuban regime welcomes annually. Today, trade between Cuban and Canada is at the highest it has been in years, with a flow of more than US$ 1 billion per year.

“We witness how Canadians rise firmly and bravely against injustice everywhere in the world (…) We ask that you recognize how our people are suffering and to do something concrete about it, even if only a little bit,” stated former political prisoner Luis Zúñiga.

Jurist René F. Bolio, president of the Mexican Commission for Human Rights, who traveled to Canada to participate in the launching of the “unlock Cuba” campaign, stated that while the regime summons the international community to promote tourism to the island, it represses and sentences to jail peaceful demonstrators for exercising their rights to protest.

“The regime in Havana has taken advantage of the present crisis in Ukraine -and before that, the COVID-19 crisis- to summarily try and sentence secretly dozens of young Cubans to long prison terms simply for their demands of basic liberties. It is time for us to shed light on what is really happening in Cuba,” stated the attorney.

Gutierrez Boronat highlighted that “most Canadians do not know where their dollars go when they vacation there, or when they invest there.”

“The Cuban military owns almost exclusively all the resorts and the hotels; it’s the military that receives between 80% to 90% of all that money, not the Cuban people.”
“Unlock Cuba” is a long-term public education campaign, also launched in France, Spain and Italy. Its objective is to raise awareness about how citizens of those and other countries can help the Cuban people in their struggle for human rights and basic freedoms.

The first images of the campaign include the prisoners from the July 11, 2021 protests who were sentenced to jail terms and to forced labor for expressing discontent toward the Communist government which does not represent them and is against democracy.

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