

United States Senate

January 17, 2020

An Open Letter to European and Canadian Tourists Traveling to Cuba

Dear Friends:

As you consider traveling to Cuba, I urge you to take the time to understand the full implications of your trip. While you may be able to travel freely to the island, Cuban nationals are unable to enjoy the same freedoms in their own country, creating a reprehensible apartheid system.

Your experience in Cuba, whether you realize it or not, will be completely organized by the Cuban regime. The average Cuban does not mix with tourists freely. Only Cubans approved by the government can interact with tourists. The Cuban Communist Party government controls everything and everyone on the island. Everywhere you go, every event you attend, every hotel and restaurant you frequent, is either owned by the government or closely controlled by the government. Your every move is watched.

Any money you spend in Cuba goes directly to support the regime, not to help the people of Cuba. Control of the tourism industry is accomplished by the simple means of maintaining two currencies: one for Cubans and one for tourists. The tourist peso is worth about one U.S. dollar. But the Cuban people are forced to use a worthless currency that is the only one accepted at the government stores where they are allowed to shop. Food shortages are common, and basic food items are close to unaffordable for most Cubans. Freedom of information is also heavily restricted, and the government maintains this control by charging internet access costs that are out of reach for most Cubans.

All of the people you come into contact with as a tourist are little more than slave laborers and totally dependent upon the government for the most basic needs of life. This repressive economic system controls everything, and the people of Cuba are not closer to freedom.

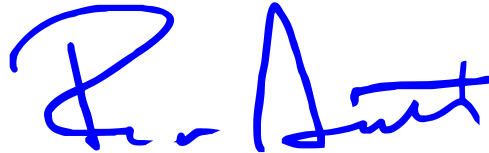
The violence, instability and chaos we see today in Latin America is directly tied to the oppressive Cuban Regime, which continues to prop up dangerous dictators throughout the region, including Maduro in Venezuela and Ortega in Nicaragua.

I urge you to reconsider your trip. If the past six decades of atrocities, oppression and misery inflicted on the Cuban people by the regime is not enough, think about how your dollars will be used to further cause harm. Visiting Cuba shows your support for a ruthless dictatorship that has denied Cubans their basic rights for far too long. Instead, I urge you to stand with the people of Cuba as they fight for a new era of freedom and opportunity.

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For the sake of the same democracy and freedom that allows you to take vacations, I hope you reconsider your plans to visit Cuba.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott". The signature is stylized with a large initial "R" and a prominent "S".

Rick Scott
United States Senator