**Will Death of Fidel Castro Improve Human Rights in Cuba?**

Some Cuban-Americans believe the death of Fidel Castro means human rights abuses in Cuba will end. Jose Sanchez is one of them.

“We had a bad dictator that had Cuba under oppression and repression for almost sixdecades is no longer with us, and that will give an opportunity to the Cuban people to start the journey towards freedom and democracy.”

Sanchez lives in Little Havana, an area of Miami, Florida, where many Cuban-Americans live. Lissette Calderon lives there, too. She says the death of Fidel Castro is the beginning of a new Cuba.

“The people of Cuba do not have free elections and there’s no democracy. And I think those of us aren’t gonna rest until we see the freedom for the people of Cuba.”

Fidel Castro began ruling the country in 1959. In 2008, he gave the presidency to his younger brother, Raul. For almost 58 years, the Cuban people have had few civil and political freedoms. Thousands of activists have been punished or imprisoned.

In 2014, relations between the United States and Cuba were reestablished. But that change did not decrease limits on freedoms in Cuba. Few people have access to the Internet; journalists and human rights activists are still regularly detained.

Guadalupe Correa is a professor of government affairs and security studies at the University of Texas. She told VOA on Skype that Raul Castro, who has slowly taken control of Cuba, must now decide if his brother’s death will bring major changes to the country.

“He needs to change his approach to his own country and allow the country to be more open.”

Some American lawmakers made similar statements on Twitter. Congressman Carlos Curbelo said Castro’s death is an opportunity for opposition leaders in Cuba to become stronger.

But Brian Fonseca, the director of the Public Policy Institute at Florida International University, is not as optimistic. He told VOA on Skype that human rights activists will see things get worse in Cuba before they get better.

He says that is because people in power want to keep power. So, he says, current political leaders might react to Castro’s death by limiting any opposition -- at least in the short term.

I’m Christopher Jones-Cruise.

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**Words in This Story**

**decade** – n. a ten year period

**approach** – n. a way of dealing with something; a way of doing or thinking about something

**optimistic** – adj. having or showing hope for the future; expecting good things to happen

**short term** – adj. a short period of time at the beginning of something