Cuba Defends Lula, Maduro at Sao Paulo Forum in Nicaragua

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The 23rd Sao Paulo Forum meets in Managua this week to advance the unity of Latin America's left in the face of renewed attacks by global capitalism.

The Cuban delegation at the 23rd Sao Paulo Forum reaffirmed their support for Venezuelan President Maduro and former Brazilian President Luiz Inacio "Lula" da Silva Sunday, claiming both leaders were victims of an "imperialist offensive."

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In an interview with Prensa Latina, Jorge Arias, deputy head of the Department of International Relations of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba, emphasized the Cuban delegation's solidarity with Lula and Venezuela's Bolivarian process.

Arias argued the attacks against Maduro's government and the recent ruling against Lula were part of an "imperialist offensive" waged by the oligarchic right to besiege the region and reverse the gains made by the left during the past two decades.

Arias' comments come just days after former Lula's politicized conviction on corruption charges and in the midst of continuous attempts to derail the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela, which faces a crucial democratic test later this month as representatives are elected to the country's National Constituent Assembly.

The Cuban delegation was joined by delegates representing social movements, popular bases and leftist parties across Latin America and the Caribbean at the 23rd Sao Paulo Forum, convened Sunday in Nicaragua's capital Managua.

The objective of the three-day conference is to further advance the regional, ideological and practical unity of the continent's left in its fight to consolidate its national liberation goals in the face of a renewed offensive by global capitalism against the peoples of the region.

Upon arriving in Managua Saturday, Puerto Rican independence leader and recently-released political prisoner Oscar Lopez Rivera stressed the importance the forum in remarks to reporters.

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"My freedom was achieved due to the solidarity of people like (those in) Nicaragua, who love freedom and justice," said Lopez Rivera, who was released in May after spending 36 years in prison for his fight to liberate Puerto Rico from U.S. colonialism.

The forum will also officially adopt the Consensus for Our America, a 24-page document dedicated to late Cuban revolutionary leader Fidel Castro that lays out the principles, purpose, objectives and priorities of the forum's participants. The forum's participants hope that the text, drafted collectively in past work sessions, will serve as a key programmatic document for progressive forces in not only Latin America, but the entire globe.

"The accumulation of capital is leading to the concentration and centralization of it (through) neoliberal policies focused on privatization and private appropriation of state enterprises, as well as the use of public funds to socialize the losses of private enterprises," the document points out, adding that global capitalism seeks to eliminate any progressive or leftist presence from the world's social, institutional and political spaces.

Founded by the Worker's Party of Brazil in 1990, the Sao Paulo Forum was established in a bid to unify the efforts of the world's major leftist forces in the wake of Soviet socialism's collapse and the advance of neoliberalism, which stripped workers and poor people of hard-fought gains while privatizing previously off-limits sectors of national economies and the global commons alike.

The forum will entail various working groups and plenaries before ending Tuesday, a night prior to Wednesday's celebration marking 38 years since the triumph of the Sandinista Revolution. The revolution deposed U.S.-backed dictator Anastasio Somoza and brought the Sandinista Liberation Front to power, ushering in a period of sustained economic progress, poverty reduction, peace and stability in the Central American nation.