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Activists lash out at Canada for 'aggression towards Cuba and Venezuela'

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Canada has been criticized for its role, along with the United States, in what activists call aggression towards Cuba and Venezuela.

The efforts of Canada, the United States and other western nations are designed "to cause as much destruction as they can in Venezuela" and to choke Cuba, according Dr Isaac Saney, co-chairman of the Canadian Network on Cuba (CNC).

"We live in extremely dangerous times," said Saney, who was one of three presenters at a panel discussion in Toronto titled, "Cuba in the Time of Trump: AN ISLAND AGAINST THE EMPIRE".

The discussion, at A Different Booklist Cultural Centre, and organized by the Canadian-Cuban Friendship Association Toronto and the CNC, came just days after the United States tightened its decades-old embargo against Cuba, banning cruises to Cuba under new restrictions on US travel to the Spanish-speaking nation.

US officials in President Donald Trump's administration said the measures are to pressure Cuba to reform and stop supporting Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro.

Panelist Yoslaidy Clemente López, a consul at Cuba's diplomatic mission in Toronto, described the US action as "crazy", but said the experience is nothing new for Cubans.

"It's just a cycle," she said. "Cuba will stand independent and sovereign forever."

Saney said the United States wants to “extinguish” Cuba because the Caribbean country “represents an example and a vision of a better world”.

“In this struggle that Cuba is waging is the fact that they are an example of resistance and they insist on their right to self-determination,” he charged. “The United States cannot stand any country that stands against the empire.”

In the case of Venezuela, said Saney, it’s being attacked because Maduro and former President Hugo Chávez represent a “seizing of a very important section of the Americas out of the hands of US imperialism and the creation of a project that was trying to use the resources to the benefit of its people”.

Venezuela, he said, “has more than just oil. But, there is a whole series of other riches that that they have, such as gold, that not only the US wants but also Canadian mining companies want as well”.

There also is a “profound racist element” to the “undermining” of the government of Venezuela, where the people in power are overwhelmingly the poor of African, Indigenous and mixed-race descent, Saney charged.

Panelist Cikiah Thomas, after commending Cuba and its former President Fidel Castro, especially on despatching military troops to Africa in the 1970s in support of Angola’s fight against US-based South African forces, then turned his attention to Venezuela.

Thomas, chair of the Global Afrikan Congress (GAC), said Venezuela is in a “critical situation” that he blames on meddling from the US and allies such as Canada.

“Canada likes to pride itself as a country of laws but this is lost on the Canadian government when it comes to Venezuela,” Thomas said. “It is time for Canada to come out with her real reasons for the aggression towards the legitimate government and people of Venezuela.”

The actions against Venezuela are “immoral, unethical and illegal”, said Thomas, and Canadians should contact their parliamentary representatives and demand an end to the involvement by the Liberal Party government of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

The GAC has embarked on what it refers to as an international lobbying campaign to mobilize “progressive forces all the world over to resist the unprovoked attack on Venezuela”.

The campaign includes letter-writing to the Presidents of South Africa and Nigeria, urging them to “champion the cause of the Venezuelan people” by bringing up the Venezuelan situation for debate at fora such as the African Union and the United Nations.

“In our opinion”, GAC says in its letter, “Mr Trump is directing his puppets to recolonize Venezuela.”