

Party and the military use their positions for self-enrichment, average Cubans face a status quo of limited economic opportunities. As the gap between the “haves” and the “have nots” grows in Cuba, it appears that the Castros’ Orwellian dystopia is a system in which all Cubans are equal, but some Cubans are more equal than others.

Finally, looking outward, at the Summit of the Americas last week, where leaders of the Western Hemisphere grappled with an unprecedented migration and humanitarian crisis, Raul Castro may have been absent, but the legacy of ruin in Venezuela was front and center. In a July 2017 Senate hearing, Organization of American States Secretary General Luis Almagro described Cuba’s presence in Venezuela as an “occupation army.” While Nicolas Maduro clings to his failed ideological, military, and economic alliance with the Castro regime, Venezuelans are suffering from food shortages, a collapsed healthcare system, and rampant crime.

This brutal reality is the Castros’ legacy for the Cuban people and the hemisphere. In his role as First Vice President since 2013, Mr. Diaz Canel has been Raul Castro’s first accomplice. So while Cubans will never stop dreaming for a future in which they are guaranteed human rights and are truly free to pursue economic prosperity, they know that Mr. Diaz Canel represents little more than a continuation of the Castro regime.

Turning to U.S. foreign policy, to those who would argue Cuba is ready to be a member of the community of nations, let me point to the attacks against American diplomats in Havana. U.S. personnel have faced an unprecedented ordeal. More than 50 unexplained attacks have affected more than two dozen American citizens, with some cases involving lasting, physical brain damage. Let anyone who harbors doubts about these incidents refer to the Trudeau government’s announcement this week regarding incidents affecting Canadian officials and changes to Canada’s diplomatic presence in Cuba. These attacks are real. People are suffering.

Cuban officials attempting to dismiss these egregious attacks is yet another sign of the disingenuous nature of the dictatorship. Whether the attacks were perpetrated by Cuban intelligence services or involve the participation of another country’s intelligence services, it is unfathomable that a government that prides itself on running a police state would even try to feign ignorance about these incidents. I refuse to accept the premise that members of the Castro regime are not in some way complicit or have no information about who is responsible. The State Department must continue its investigation of these attacks.

The Trump administration must also move beyond Presidential promises towards a substantive strategy that pressures the regime to undertake serious

reforms to advance democratic values and human rights and end its support of failed leadership in Venezuela.

First, the United States must remain steadfast in supporting democratic activists in Cuba. While President Trump claims to support those fearlessly advocating for their rights, his budget proposals tell a different story. Alarmingly, his fiscal year 2018 request to Congress proposed zero dollars for democracy programs in Cuba, while his fiscal year 2019 budget only requested \$10 million. In contrast to his statements, this amounts to rejecting support for the Cuban people and our interests.

Additionally, as the U.S. Government hones new tools to advance accountability for human rights violations, we should utilize targeted global Magnitsky sanctions to put a spotlight on the Cuban officials responsible for these abuses.

Second, although senior administration officials have been critical of business deals with the Cuban military that enrich the Castro regime in the process, the regulations the administration introduced in November 2017 fail to address key elements of commerce that benefit Cuba’s dictatorship. In the coming weeks, I will launch a congressional review of Treasury and Commerce regulations in order to end unnecessary loopholes that benefit the regime.

Finally, as leaders from the Americas and Europe come together to address the multifaceted crisis in Venezuela, they must seriously confront Cuba’s role in Venezuela’s collapse. To date, efforts to coordinate increased international pressure on the Venezuelan Government have given the Castro regime a free pass. There was widespread support in the hemisphere for Peru’s decision to not invite Nicolas Maduro to the Summit of the Americas due to the authoritarian nature of his government; yet no one, including the Trump administration, held Cuba’s dictatorship to the same standard. It is time for the administration to reverse this trend and call for a coordinated diplomatic response to Cuba’s longstanding role in Venezuela’s emergence as a failed state.

In closing, I urge my colleagues join me in speaking out against the undemocratic political spectacle in Cuba this week. We must join together to pursue a comprehensive policy towards Cuba that pressures regime officials to loosen their stranglehold on Cuba’s economy and political system and that advances the true democratic and justice reforms the Cuban people so desperately desire.

103RD ANNIVERSARY OF THE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE

Mr. REED. Mr. President, this week we solemnly observe the 103rd anniversary of the Armenian genocide.

Over a century ago, one of the greatest tragedies of the 20th century began

when the Young Turk leaders of the Ottoman Empire executed more than 200 prominent Armenians. What followed was an 8-year systematic campaign of oppression and massacre. By 1923, an estimated 1.5 million Armenians were killed, and over a half a million survivors were exiled.

These atrocities affected the lives of every Armenian living in Asia Minor and, indeed, across the globe. The U.S. Ambassador to the Ottoman Empire during this dark time, Henry Morgenthau, Sr., unsuccessfully pleaded with President Wilson to take action and later remembered the events of the genocide, saying, “I am confident that the whole history of the human race contains no such horrible episode as this. The great massacres and persecutions of the past seem almost insignificant when compared to the sufferings of the Armenian race in 1915.” Clearly, the suffering of the Armenian people must never be forgotten.

The survivors of the Armenian genocide, however, persevered due to their unbreakable spirit and steadfast resolve and went on to greatly contribute to the lands in which they found new homes and communities, including the United States. That is why we not only commemorate this grave tragedy each year, but we also take this moment to celebrate the traditions, the contributions, as well as the bright future of the Armenian people. Indeed, my home State of Rhode Island continues to be enriched by our strong and vibrant Armenian-American community.

This genocide has been denied for far too long. To honor the memory of this tragedy, I have joined with several of my colleagues on resolutions over the years to encourage the U.S. to officially recognize the Armenian genocide.

As we remember the past, we remain committed to forging a brighter future. We must continue to guard against hatred and oppression so that we can prevent such crimes against humanity.

As ranking member on the Senate Armed Services Committee, I remain committed to supporting assistance to Armenia to strengthen security, promote economic growth, and foster democratic reforms and development.

We must find a way to come together to recognize the truth of what happened and to provide unwavering support and assistance to those facing persecution today.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

CONGRATULATING CONGRESSIONAL YOUTH CABINET PARTICIPANTS

• Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. President, today I wish to recognize 32 Arkansans who have taken an interest in playing a positive, productive role in their communities, the State of Arkansas, and our country.

In September, this group of high school students convened as part of my