

## Cuba has begun talks with the United States



*President Miguel Díaz-Canel has stated that Cuba and the United States have begun a dialogue (Source: [YouTube/Canal Caribe](#))*

Cuba and the U.S. are engaged in dialogue. As Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel [confirmed](#) in a speech to government officials on Friday morning, Cuban officials have “recently” begun a dialogue with representatives of the U.S. government.

According to Díaz-Canel, the talks are aimed at “finding solutions through dialogue to the bilateral differences between the two nations.” The goal is to first identify the most pressing issues, determine both sides’ willingness to take concrete measures for the benefit of their respective populations, and explore areas of cooperation “to counter threats and ensure the security and peace of both nations as well as the Latin American and Caribbean region.” At the same time, the president emphasized that agreements are still “a long way off.”

Díaz-Canel stressed that the Cuban side insists on conducting the process “on the basis of equality and respect for the political systems of both states, and the sovereignty and self-determination of our governments.”

He also stated that “it has never been the practice of the Cuban revolutionary leadership, nor is it today, to react to speculative campaigns on this issue.” He described it as a “very sensitive process that is being conducted with seriousness and a sense of responsibility.” The dialogue is being led by Raúl Castro and himself.

## The Vatican as a silent mediator

Díaz-Canel mentioned that “international actors” had facilitated the contacts, without naming them. The background to this is apparently the [role of the Vatican](#), which has [already previously](#) acted as a [mediator](#) between Cuba and the U.S.

Just one day earlier, on Thursday, the Cuban government had [announced](#) the release of 51 prisoners “in the spirit of goodwill and the close and smooth relations between the Cuban state and the Vatican.” Díaz-Canel made it clear that this decision was made independently and without external pressure, while Cuban media noted that amnesties are a common practice in Cuba. All of the individuals concerned had served a significant portion of their sentences and behaved well in prison.

Shortly before, Cardinal Secretary of State Pietro Parolin [stated](#) that the Holy See had taken the “necessary steps” to ensure a “negotiated solution” between the two countries. Cuba’s Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez Parrilla had also been received by Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican shortly before. Also in Rome, a high-ranking U.S. diplomat had held a meeting with the Vatican’s equivalent of the Foreign Ministry. Neither Washington nor Havana has officially confirmed Vatican mediation.

## Trump’s Pressure and the Question of a Deal

U.S. President Donald Trump had repeatedly claimed in public in recent weeks that his cabinet was holding talks with Cuban authorities. Havana had initially denied this on several occasions, but most recently refrained from issuing further denials.

The news website USA Today [reported](#) recently that the White House is preparing a “surprise economic agreement” with Cuba, which could include, among other things, an easing of travel restrictions for U.S. citizens as well as agreements on ports, energy, and tourism infrastructure. According to insiders, a limited easing of sanctions is also under discussion.

In return, the U.S. could allow Díaz-Canel—whom U.S. officials reportedly view as an obstacle to the ongoing talks—to step down from office, while members of the influential Castro family would likely remain on the island. The news agency Reuters [reported that](#) Trump had recently floated the possibility of a “friendly takeover” of Cuba—“or not.”

According to an [assessment](#) by the magazine Responsible Statecraft, Senator Marco Rubio, who has long sought regime change in Havana, has recently distanced himself from demands for immediate political change on the island. In late February, he stated that gradual economic reforms could offer a path toward improving bilateral relations.

According to the Miami Herald and Axios, Rubio’s advisors at the State Department have met with the grandson of former Cuban President Raúl Castro, Raúl Guillermo Rodríguez Castro, most recently on the sidelines of the CARICOM summit in St. Kitts and Nevis. The Cuban side has not denied these contacts but has described them as “speculation.” Rodríguez Castro was present at the meeting where the dialogue was announced.

## Not a Trustworthy Interlocutor

The context of the talks is marked by significant pressure on Havana since the abduction of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro on January 3 cut off the country's most important energy supplier.

Since then, the U.S. government has massively tightened its unilateral sanctions against the island. This includes diverting ships carrying oil supplies that Cuba purchased on the world market, as well as threats against actors in the shipping and energy sectors. De facto, the island is under a naval blockade for energy supplies.

Cuba's government has since offered the U.S. dialogue on multiple occasions. Díaz-Canel summarized the situation in his address as follows: "Whenever we have faced tense moments like this one of confrontation with the U.S. government, individuals and institutions have emerged to help create channels that enable dialogue."

What will become of the dialogue, of course, remains entirely open. Havana is well aware that the Trump administration is not a trustworthy negotiating partner, having twice started a war against Iran while negotiations were ongoing. Given the ever-worsening supply crisis caused by the energy blockade, Cuba has few alternatives. For a serious dialogue to take place, however, concrete gestures from Washington are needed soon to reduce the economic pressure on the island. ([Cubaheute](#))