

Díaz-Canel mobilizes army against Havana's problems



Garbage on a street in Havana (Source: [FB/Cubadebate](#)/AI-scaled)

Cuban President Miguel Díaz-Canel has announced an action plan to solve numerous accumulated problems in the Cuban capital Havana.

At two extraordinary meetings of the Provincial Committee of the Communist Party (PCC) this weekend, the head of state ordered the deployment of the Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) and the Ministry of the Interior (Minint), as reported by the party newspaper *Granma*.

Working groups for three core problems

Díaz-Canel announced the formation of working groups that will work with local authorities and mass organizations to address citizens' complaints "directly." The focus is on three main problems: electricity distribution, water supply, and garbage collection. In recent weeks, citizens have repeatedly voiced their discontent about ongoing power outages, mountains of garbage, and water problems, including by blocking roads and banging pots and pans in protest.

Prime Minister Manuel Marrero Cruz, Defense Minister Álvaro López Miera, PCC cadre secretary Roberto Morales Ojeda, and other high-ranking officials participated in the crisis meetings. The presence of the entire leadership can be seen as a sign of the urgency of the situation.

Military aid for overburdened neighborhoods

The Revolutionary Armed Forces (FAR) will provide support, particularly in densely populated areas such as Centro Habana, Deputy Prime Minister Inés María Chapman

Waugh explained at Saturday's briefing. Each district has been assigned a ministry for coordination.

The president emphasized the need for strict controls on fuel distribution after “multiple irregularities” had occurred there. With regard to electricity, the rotating shutdown schedules must be adhered to. “Anyone who exceeds the specified limit, even if they can pay for it, must stop consumption,” said Díaz-Canel, referring to the nationwide bottlenecks in the power grid.

The head of state ordered that areas with the longest outages should be given priority in terms of water supply. Here, too, he announced “strict control systems” at critical points in the water distribution network. According to official figures, around 248,000 people in Havana, about 10 percent of the city's population, have no access to water. Here, too, the main cause is the lack of electricity, fuel, and spare parts for pumps.

Díaz-Canel acknowledged the population's right to complain, but warned that these complaints must be made “in the appropriate forums” of the party, the government, or the relevant institutions – “not by blocking roads or other public spaces.” Protests must be “decent, civilized, and without causing disruption.”

The use of the military for civilian tasks is nothing new in Cuba. During the “special period” in the 1990s, the armed forces already supported civilian institutions in coping with the crisis. However, the deployment of the armed forces has nothing to do with special powers, such as emergency law. They are primarily in demand because of their personnel and organizational capacities.

Garbage crisis worsens

The garbage problem in particular has recently worsened dramatically. There are currently 474 vehicles available for garbage collection – significantly fewer than before the current crisis. Due to the shortage of foreign currency, fewer spare parts can be imported, and the permanent fuel shortage is also a major problem.

State journalist Ana Teresa Badía [wrote on Facebook](#): “Havana smells of garbage” and criticized “galloping institutional indifference.” Not everything can be blamed on the US blockade, Badía explained, adding that “things like empathy, work, and respect for citizens do not depend on any blockade.”

During heavy rainfall a few weeks ago, streets in Centro Habana, Diez de Octubre, and Vedado turned into veritable “[rivers of garbage](#),” while a power outage plunged the city into darkness. Residents shared images of floating garbage containers and polluted water flooding into building entrances and apartments.

Prime Minister Marrero Cruz emphasized the need to strictly control scarce resources such as transportation and fuel. “It takes a lot of people to take action and change situations,” said Roberto Morales Ojeda. The population and state-owned enterprises should be involved in all measures.

Díaz-Canel described the actions as “an important step on a long, difficult, but not impossible path to rebuild Havana.” “We will win the fight,” the president declared, calling on people to “free themselves from passivity.” ([Cubaheute](#))