

# *Hundreds of Thousands of Cubans Pay Tribute to Fidel Castro*

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Havana, November 29 (RHC)-- Hundreds of thousands lined up for hours to pay their final respects to the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, Fidel Castro. Over the past two days, on Monday and Tuesday, throngs of people gathered at Havana's Plaza de la Revolución, passing in front of a huge photo of the revolutionary leader.

A long line of mourners snaked through the vast square as Cubans walked past a memorial to the former leader. Some were crying, others saluted a flower-flanked nearly life-sized photo of Fidel dressed in his army fatigues, with a backpack and rifle slung over his shoulder in the Sierra Maestra mountains. In the square, a massive banner of the photo was draped across the facade of the Cuban National Library.

The public event began at 9 a.m. local time yesterday morning -- the first of a two-day memorial dedicated to the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution as the country observes nine days of mourning. A mass gathering in the Plaza de la Revolución Tuesday night marks the close of the memorial before Fidel's ashes depart on a cross-country journey, retracing in reverse his historic steps from Santiago de Cuba to Havana in 1959 to mark the triumph of the Revolution. The four-day procession will conclude with a state

funeral in Santiago de Cuba, where Fidel's ashes will be put to rest at the Santa Ifigenia Cemetery, alongside the remains of Cuban independence hero Jose Marti.

Fidel's last major speech in Havana's Plaza de la Revolución was on International Workers' Day in 2006, in which he spoke about the achievements of the Cuban Revolution since its 1959 victory and the scourge of U.S. imperialism. Just several months later, Fidel fell into ill health and underwent surgery, forcing him to go on medical leave and delegating his duties to then-Vice President Raul Castro.

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