

Saving lives in the face of disaster, a Fidel constancy



Photo: Fidel Soldado de las Ideas

By Roberto Morejón

In a year in which two hurricanes caused damage in Cuba and two powerful earthquakes and aftershocks hit the south-eastern part of the country, many people remembered Fidel Castro's concern to save human lives in the face of any natural disaster.

On the anniversary of the physical disappearance of the historic leader of the Cuban Revolution, we highlight his legacy in terms of preparing to mitigate the effects of natural disasters, especially hurricanes.

Older Cubans recall that Fidel Castro, then Prime Minister, was at the forefront of efforts to help the victims of Hurricane Flora in October 1963.

The man who led the uprising against the dictatorship of Fulgencio Batista toured the Caribbean archipelago after the hurricane had moved slowly and erratically for four days, causing further devastation.

In the book *Fidel al frente del rescate* (Fidel at the Front of the Rescue), it is reported that while the author of *La historia me absolverá* was insisting on reaching the places most devastated by Flora, several of his companions were left on a tree in the middle of the water.

The human and political will of the leader of the Revolution to preserve life and property was highlighted in the order to build works to dam water and prevent flooding. The experience of the Flora was crucial to the project of building the dams, and its importance was demonstrated when Hurricane Oscar hit the eastern region of Guantánamo in October 2024.

Although the storm caused flooding unprecedented in the region, experts say it would have been worse without the dams.

Forty-two years after Flora, President Fidel Castro took an interest in the fate of Americans overwhelmed by Hurricane Katrina.

On his instructions, the largest of the Antilles sent 100 general practitioners and specialists to help the victims of Katrina, an offer that the United States, which was responsible for the blockade of the Caribbean archipelago, did not accept.

With the same readiness with which the statesman organized the country's response to the devastation caused by natural disasters, Cubans are today, in adverse material circumstances, recovering from the passage of two hurricanes and the effects of two earthquakes.

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