

# Cubans expect Castro back soon

**Certainty appeared to be growing among Cubans that Fidel Castro will be back at work soon.**

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**HAVANA** - Official assurances that Fidel Castro will be back on his feet in a few weeks after intestinal surgery have trickled down to the street, where Cubans say the leader's time isn't up yet.

"He is invulnerable, and will get better," said Lazaro M. Martínez, a 65-year-old flower vendor. "We are anxious to see him, but we also understand the situation he is in."

Castro has not been seen publicly since July 26.

Five days later, Castro's secretary went on state television to announce that the leader had undergone surgery for intestinal bleeding and was temporarily ceding power to his younger brother, Defense Minister Raúl Castro.

Statements in recent days -- such as Vice President Carlos Lage's remark that Castro himself has said he'll be back at work "in a few weeks" -- seem to have calmed uncertainty and speculation among Cubans that their leader was on his deathbed, or maybe even in his grave. Still, details on his specific condition or what surgical procedure Castro underwent have yet to be released.

Many Cubans say they have no reason to doubt the statements from officials that Castro will return.

"We trust in our leaders," Aleida Guevara, the daughter of Latin American revolutionary fighter Ernesto "Che" Guevara, said in a live Internet forum discussion about her father organized by the Cuban government.

"The Cuban people are calm, though they continue to be concerned about the health of El Comandante," said Guevara, who lives in Havana.

Cuba's Communist Youth newspaper on Tuesday published letters to Castro from children and teenagers across the country.

"We care about you so much, and since the moment of this sad news haven't stopped thinking about you," wrote Rina Forment, a 10-year-old in the eastern city of Santiago.

Big celebrations for Castro's 80th birthday this Sunday were postponed until Dec. 2, the 50th anniversary of Cuba's Revolutionary Armed Forces.