

Fidel Castro Makes First Television Appearance in 11 Months

Top Story — Cuba's former leader, [Fidel Castro, made his first television appearance in 11 months](#) on Monday when he was interviewed on the Cuban talkshow show "Mesa Redonda," or "Round table."

Dressed in a blue jacket and a checkered shirt, [Castro discussed his views on current affairs](#) in the Middle East and Asia including the conflict between North and South Korea.

Since undergoing emergency intestinal surgery in the summer of 2006 and handing over power his younger brother Raúl, [the older Castro has stayed largely out of the public eye](#) and focused most of his efforts on writing newspaper columns.

However, on this past Saturday [photos were released of Castro](#) during a visit to the National Center of Scientific Research in Havana.

The photos and television appearance come less than a week after the [Cuban government agreed to release 52 political prisoners](#), in a deal mediated by the Catholic Church. Castro's television appearance also comes at a time in which observers are watching Cuba closely, searching for signs of a transition to democracy and an improvement in the island nation's human rights record.

"It would be reasonable to think that Castro is dying and there might be change in the air," said Ian Vasquez, the director of the Cato Institute's Center for Global Liberty and Prosperity, [according to the Christian Science Monitor](#). "But his [appearance now] could be a signal to Cubans not to get high hopes. I think the more important message is: 'I am still around, do not get any fancy ideas.' "