

INSECURITY AFFECTS TOURISM IN DOMINICAN REPUBLIC



The unrests and increased criminality in the Dominican Republic have resulted in growing concerns about the safety of the visitors.

Tourism in the Dominican Republic has been negatively affected by several deaths of international tourists. **Over less than a year, nine American tourists died in the country under suspicious circumstances at Quisqueya hotels.** The mystery is even more intriguing as all casualties were resolved as heart failure or pulmonary edema.

The Dominican press actively covered the protests of the victims' relatives who demand clarification.

The police of the Caribbean country labeled the deaths as isolated events and pushed for more investigations, while authorities and the so-called 'leisure industry' try to ease the situation.

Francisco García, the minister of tourism in the Dominican Republic, recalled that over the last five years the country has seen more than 30 million arrivals, with no reports of strange deaths.

The police deployment to find the cause of the deaths is notorious, and it was followed by an order to install security cameras in hotels.

Despite the prompt response, the measures did nothing to dispel the growing doubts and concerns surrounding the safety that the Dominican Republic is able to offer the travelers.

The Caribbean nation registers more than 6 million tourists every year, of which 2.2 million are Americans. The tourism industry raised almost 8 billion dollars in 2018, amounting to 17% of the country's GDP.

However, several NGOs and human rights organizations speak out against the increase in violence in the Dominican Republic in recent years, reports thinly veiled by the powerful and booming tourism infrastructure.

Citizens were moved by a recent shooting that left former US Major League Baseball player, David Ortiz, wounded; while others recall the rise of gender crimes and armed robberies.

News reports highlight the increase in deaths over drug and score-settling, although official reports speak of a decrease in homicide rates.

In any case, the Dominican Republic reported 1,068 intentional homicides, and 2,145 injured by firearms in 2018, both high rates of violence given the country's population.

Analysts explain that this is happening due to youth unemployment and lack of expectations of the new generations, reasons that push some towards illicit activities and are later seen riding motorcycles to commit their crimes.

Local citizens are concerned about the decreased security level not only for themselves but also tourism in the Dominican Republic, which is the main pillar of the country's economy.

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