



*Embassy of the Republic of Cuba
South Africa*

PRESS RELEASE

Cuban doctors will save lives not enrich themselves. This is International Solidarity!

The world is facing an emergency far graver than what we have experienced in over a century. This crisis demands international solidarity and cooperation. If we act together, the propagation of Covid-19 will be halted in a faster and more cost-effective manner.

The virus knows no boundaries or ideologies. It does not distinguish the rich from the poor. However, its devastating effects multiply there where people that are most vulnerable and get the lowest incomes live. No country should assume it is big enough, or powerful enough to defend itself, isolating itself and ignoring the efforts and needs of others.

For decades Cuba has accumulated experiences in the development of international health cooperation, as generously acknowledged by the World Health Organization.

In the last few weeks, we have responded without hesitation to cooperation requests from other nations. So far, Cuban brigades of healthcare professionals have been deployed to join in the national efforts of 23 countries against Covid-19, including South Africa. Those Medical Brigades joined others working in 61 countries as part of the historic medical cooperation program that Cuba selflessly offers, as a result of its internationalism and solidarity, which means to share with others what we have, even if it's scarce.

The Cuban Medical Brigade already in South Africa to assist against Covid-19 is integrated by 217 highly qualified healthcare professionals with a lot of experience. Many of them have previously assisted other countries, including South Africa.

It is the humble contribution of a small nation with very limited resources and affected by a brutal economic blockade imposed for 60 years by the US government. In their obsession to destroy the Cuban Revolution, the Trump Administration and its allies are now also promoting a denigrating campaign against the presence of Cuban doctors in other countries. Top US officials devote their time to issue statements threatening governments that faced with the drama of the pandemic exercise their sovereignty and decide to request Cuba's assistance.

This smear campaign is immoral in all circumstances. In the midst of a pandemic is also a crime, because is seeking to deprive millions of people from their universal human right to healthcare services.

All our Medical Brigades have been sent to other countries by decision of the Cuban government based on official requests, without abandoning high quality care to the Cuban population.

All our healthcare professionals are volunteers that decided to help those in need, even at the cost of separating from their families, friends and homes. The ones assisting against the Covid-19 have already attended over 5,500 patients in isolation areas, hospitals and red zones jeopardizing their own health and lives. They will do the same in South Africa.

The Cuban government pays the full salary of all our doctors while they are assisting other countries. The host countries have assumed the transportation, accommodation, food and basic means for the doctors, the minimum necessary in order to contribute to the sustainability of our healthcare services.

Cuban internationalist doctors are not looking for luxuries or big payments as it is usually the case with highly qualified specialists around the world. They are prepared to work even in the most difficult situations, including very complex rural areas, because their only priority is to save every live that can be saved. They are educated on the vision of Che Guevara who said: "The life of a single human being is worth a million times more than all the property of the richest man on earth."

Our Embassy has received thousands of emotional messages of support and appreciation from all over this beautiful nation. Not a few have even selflessly offered their own homes to accommodate Cuban doctors. We expected nothing else from the noble South African brothers and sisters. On behalf of our doctors, the Cuban people and government, we convey our deep appreciation to the people and government of South Africa for the warm welcomed granted to our Medical Brigade.

With their altruism and heroism our health professionals destroy the denigrating campaigns and the manipulation of public opinion. We are very proud of our internationalist doctors, our "Army of the White Coats", who today are assisting other countries, including South Africa, in the fight against the coronavirus. This is International Solidarity in Action!