

Cuba offers its hand to the Caribbean



Over the last week, brigades from the Henry Reeve International Medical Contingent have departed every day.

Several Caribbean island countries have expressed the gratitude of their peoples with a warm welcome as Cuban doctors arrive, offering a helping hand with invaluable medical support to the battle against Covid-19, as a gesture of solidarity.

It was already late into the night in the Lesser Antilles when an airplane landed on the main island of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to deliver its precious human cargo, Cuban health professionals arriving to help.

At the foot of the plane's stairway, stood Ralph Gonsalves, Premier and dear friend of the Cuban Revolution, who stepped forward to receive them, and found no other words for welcome and gratitude than to evoke the founding fathers of Cuba's vocation for healing. He thanked "the Cuba of Fidel and Raul", and President Díaz-Canel, the "continuator."

At the same time, similar expressions of open affection arrived from other parts of the Caribbean. Prensa Latina reports that, on behalf of the hospitable people of Antigua and Barbuda, the United Progressive Party offered "a warm, fraternal welcome to the Cuban medical brigade that will help fight Covid-19"; while in Jamaica, Prime Minister Andrew Holness tweeted, "Jamaica appreciates Cuba's

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support as we fight this pandemic."

In Haiti, doctors who had completed their assigned mission have remained. As planned, planes were on hand for them to leave and return home, but they skipped that opportunity, delayed the family embrace, and chose to offer fresh forces to the group working to halt the devastating virus.

Marie Greta Roy Clement, Minister of Health, well aware of the great altruism of "Cuban friends," recalled the history of Cuba's hand reaching out to the Haitian people: cholera, Hurricane Matthew, the terrible earthquake...

Greetings come from all over, where the big island is leaving its mark of white lab coats, nurses' uniforms, and curing skills. It seems like a race against time, and it is, given the urgency imposed by the new disease.

Cuba has extended its hand many times, but never so many times in such a short period of time. Over the last week, brigades from the Henry Reeve International Medical Contingent Specialized in Disaster Situations and Serious Epidemics have departed every day. Eleven so far. There is no precedent.

It was dark when the plane arrived in St. Vincent and the Grenadines. When the sun rose again over the Caribbean, another group was flying to St. Lucia.

As you read these lines, there will no doubt be another hand stretching out over the sea, and another waving back. Cuba asks for no more. The greeting is enough.

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