

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 7, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to urge the State Department to take greater action to address the Cuban regime's deployment of doctors and medical personnel under conditions that represent forced labor. As of 2015, the Cuban regime had deployed more than 50,000 medical personnel for foreign medical missions in 67 countries—in essence, a global network of human trafficking that generated billions of dollars in revenue for the regime.

In recent weeks, reporting by *The New York Times* revealed how the Cuban regime manipulated and coerced participants of its foreign medical missions in Venezuela. While it has long been understood that the Cuban regime profits from these deployments, this new investigation exposes the way in which Cuban and Venezuelan officials compelled Cuban doctors to provide services and medicines only to supporters of Venezuelan dictator Nicolás Maduro. Such repugnant politicization of medical treatment forced Cuban doctors to deny essential care to sick and aging Venezuelans if they were deemed insufficiently loyal to the Maduro regime.

In recent months, investigative reporting has also provided details on how Brazil's *Mais Médicos* program subjected Cuban doctors to forced labor conditions and the respective roles of the Brazilian government, the Cuban regime, and the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO) in the program. Brazilian diplomatic cables obtained by a freedom of information request revealed that the former Brazilian government and the Cuban regime acknowledged that the financial transactions related to *Mais Médicos* needed to be structured in order to avoid potential violations of U.S. sanctions.

Additional reporting exposed how the financial arrangement between the former Government of Brazil, PAHO, and the Cuban regime allowed the regime to withhold approximately 75 percent of the Cuban doctors' wages. Under this arrangement, Cuban doctors were the only medical professionals participating in the *Mais Médicos* program to have a substantial part of their salaries retained by their government. Further reports have indicated that Cuban doctors participating in the *Mais Médicos* program frequently had their passports taken by Cuban officials to prevent them from traveling to neighboring countries, and were prohibited from having their families accompany them while stationed in Brazil. While Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro was right to terminate Cuba's participation in the *Mais Médicos* program soon after his inauguration this year, the Cuban regime continues to pursue opportunities around the world to profit off of the medical services provided by its doctors.

As the Cuban regime perpetuates this forced labor profit-scheme, we ask that the State Department provide our offices with information on the following issues:

- Due to the growing body of information about how the Cuban regime's deployment of doctors and medical professionals represents forced labor, what steps is the Administration taking to reestablish the Cuban Medical Professionals Parole program?
- In the State Department's Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report in 2015, Cuba was inappropriately upgraded in the TIP report's tier rating from Tier 3 to Tier 2 Watch List. In 2017 and 2018, Cuba was wrongly granted waivers from being downgraded back to Tier 3. Under U.S. law, Cuba is not eligible for further downgrade waivers. Given its state-sponsored forced labor regime it is our full expectation that the State Department will downgrade Cuba to a Tier 3 country for human trafficking in the 2019 TIP Report.
- Given that Cuban doctors participating in the *Mais Medicos* program were deprived of their full wages and their personal liberties were infringed upon, what is the Department of State's assessment of the respective liabilities of the former Government of Brazil, the Pan American Health Organization, and the Government of Cuba, and whether their respective actions violated international human rights law and U.S. laws relating to trafficking in persons?

As we continue our scrutiny of the Cuban regime's global activities, it is imperative that we receive a full assessment of how the State Department will support Cuban medical professionals working under such coercive conditions and what risks other governments and multilateral institutions will face for supporting Cuba's foreign medical missions. To that end, as members of the U.S. Senate, we will continue to investigate sources of direct and indirect support for Cuba's human trafficking campaigns.

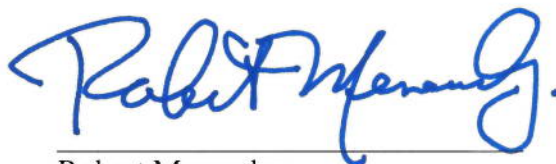
Thank you in advance for your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,



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Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator



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Robert Menendez  
U.S. Senator



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Rick Scott  
U.S. Senator

CC: The Honorable Kimberly Breier, Assistant Secretary of State for Western Hemisphere Affairs, U.S. Department of State