

## United States Senate

October 22, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary  
United States Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

It is a known fact that the illegitimate communist Cuban regime is participating in the human trafficking of doctors,<sup>1</sup> and has used the COVID-19 pandemic for profit at the expense of these hardworking physicians. Annually, the Cuban regime collects an estimated \$6-8 billion by exporting professional services, including “medical missions.” Reports have indicated that nearly 40 countries across five continents have accepted Cuban medics during the pandemic,<sup>2</sup> and over the past 60 years, more than 400,000 medical professionals have been sent by the Cuban regime overseas.<sup>3</sup>

As you may know, in 2018 four Cuban doctors working in Brazil sued the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) for arranging these fraudulent “medical missions” during which physicians are subjected to restricted movements, unwarranted surveillance and loss of income which is stolen from them by the regime.<sup>4</sup> PAHO is an arm of the United Nations and receives the majority of its funding from the United States. These doctors, who now reside in the U.S., are arguing that PAHO has “benefited from the forced labor and trafficking of more than 10,000 doctors and health professionals in Brazil from 2013 to the present.”<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “2021 Trafficking in Persons Report: Cuba.” *U.S. Department of State*.

<https://www.state.gov/reports/2021-trafficking-in-persons-report/cuba/>

<sup>2</sup> Sarah Marsh and John Zodzi, “Cuba punches above weight with ‘white coat army’ during pandemic.”

*Reuters*, September 14, 2020. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-cuba-doctors/cuba-punches-above-weight-with-white-coat-army-during-pandemic-idUSKBN2651NK>

<sup>3</sup> “Cuba: Repressive Rules for Doctors Working Abroad” *Human Rights Watch*. July 23, 2020.

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/07/23/cuba-repressive-rules-doctors-working-abroad#>

<sup>4</sup> Samuel J. Dubbin and Jonathan W. Cuneo, “Cuba’s Shameful Trafficking of Its Doctors” *Wall Street Journal*, June 21, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/cubas-shameful-trafficking-of-its-doctors-11592765020>

<sup>5</sup> Nora Gámez Torres, “Cuban doctors who worked in Brazil sue international organization alleging forced labor.” *Miami Herald*, November 30, 2018. <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/cuba/article222441145.html>

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In 2019, I joined my colleagues in the U.S. Senate in a bipartisan letter to then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo requesting information about the State Department's designation of Cuba in the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report, and the Department's position on PAHO's legal liability for deprivation of wages and infringement of civil liberties.<sup>6</sup>

Unfortunately, we know the Cuban regime engages in many more abuses. As the State Department's 2020 Human Rights Report shows, the communist authoritarian Cuban regime is guilty of arbitrary killings, forced disappearances and torture of opposition political leaders, vast internet censorship, complete restriction on freedom of the press and significant restrictions on religious freedom, including destruction of houses of worship.<sup>7</sup> Any organization that cooperates with the Cuban regime to commit such horrendous human rights abuses while receiving U.S. funding must be held accountable.

PAHO has refused to allow an investigation by the U.S. into claims of aiding trafficking and stealing income. This is unacceptable and cannot be tolerated. As Secretary of State, you have the responsibility to represent American interests abroad, and your immediate attention to this issue is needed. I ask that you promptly provide answers to the following questions:

- What action is the State Department taking to hold PAHO accountable and investigate the claims of PAHO's participation in trafficking and forced labor?
- Will the State Department publish a list of countries that contract with the Cuban regime for their medical missions program, and consider those contracts in the annual Trafficking in Persons report? If not, why not?

The international community must stand against the use of forced labor and the Cuban regime's exploitation of this crisis. I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott  
United States Senator

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<sup>6</sup> [https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/\\_cache/files/fbc3c3c4-6350-4534-85f0-f1e7da82e8ca/D888D41A55EE6DBB8CF82998E8837523.20190507-letter-to-secretary-pompeo-re-cuban-doctors.pdf](https://www.rubio.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/fbc3c3c4-6350-4534-85f0-f1e7da82e8ca/D888D41A55EE6DBB8CF82998E8837523.20190507-letter-to-secretary-pompeo-re-cuban-doctors.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> "2020 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices: Cuba." *U.S. Department of State*.  
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices/cuba/>