

Cuba's Minister of Health: "Welcome home."

By: José Angel Portal Miranda, November 23, 2018 |

Dear Doctors:

Five years ago, when the More Doctors Program for Brazil began, we did not imagine that we would face the circumstances that led us to be here today.

We give you a warm welcome to the homeland, although in reality you never left, but took Cuba with you to the most remote corners of Brazil, to the arid and poor northeast, to the Amazon rainforest and even to the interior of the satellite slums that hide misery in the big cities.

Now you return enriched by the affection and admiration of the Brazilian people, which you knew how to earn from day one, with your humanism, simplicity and professionalism.

We Cuban doctors have always been on the side of duty, even in the most complex circumstances: in political crises, in coups d'état, in foreign military invasions, earthquakes, hurricanes, in fearsome epidemics like Ebola and in the wildest places on the planet, but always on the basis of respect and recognition.

The threatening and provocative pronouncements of President-elect Jair Bolsonaro, to take effect the day after his election, confirmed to us that he was willing to jeopardize the health care of more than 30 million Brazilians. Never before had our health-care training and our professionals been offended so much and in such a short time. There's been gross lying. Administrative perks have been offered with the perverse purpose of deceiving, confusing, and constructing a great operation of breaking apart the Program and, that way, discrediting one of our Revolution's greatest conquests. For the Revolution, health care has always been considered to be a matter of the highest priority, beyond any consideration of a political nature.

We also realize the repercussions of all this on plans each one of you and your families had. In a very short time you've had to fix it so that you could carry out the evacuation that had to be organized. But you have taught us to value with special sensitivity the lives of patients, people, and their families. We are obligated to defend the values that each one of you represents and to guarantee our support for your dignity and security. This starts with the probable scenario of hostility, penal processes, harassment, and offensive measures you could have faced with Bolsonaro taking power.

You will have the possibility of returning to your jobs, to new professional tasks, or to being able to opt for a new mission abroad where your presence may be required and where you would be welcomed and respected.

We know that you bring with you a feeling of regret for everything you leave behind, for patients you were following, for the community whose health indicators were beginning to change. We know you are concerned about what will happen to Brazilians who will be left without medical attention. This is how the historical leader of the Revolution, Fidel Castro, taught us to think and act.

One cannot help but be moved by the images and the stories of the spontaneously organized farewells in thousands of places throughout the immense geography of Brazil. People know, as we do, that the arrogance and unrestraint of a leading and privileged minority in that country is responsible for the fact that you have been forced to leave your jobs. But you can be proud of your duty. The Cuban people receive you as true heroes of this Homeland, which is what you are. Our country will never be afraid of threats and provocations. It won't allow any affront to the dignity and prestige earned with the blood of its best children.

I want to reiterate to you that we are proud of each one of you, just as we are proud of the rest of the Cuban health-care collaborators who are fulfilling missions in 66 countries. And we are proud of those who protect the health of our own people, who are on what we might call the first line of combat.

Each one of you confirms Fidel's maxim, when he said about our profession: "The most important thing will have to be your total consecration to the noblest and most humane of trades: saving lives and preserving health. More than doctors, you will be jealous guardians of what is most precious to human beings. You are apostles and creators of a more humane world."

You are the way you are in our society on account of justice and humanism, not through the law of the strongest. We know that the Revolution can count on you and you can always count on the Revolution.

Welcome to Cuba and accept within your being the verses of the hymn we have all sung today: "The fatherland beholds you proudly. Until victory, always!"

(Taken from the official website of the Minister of Health of Cuba)

http://www.cubadebate.cu/opinion/2018/11/23/bienvenidos-a-casa/#.W_gxfE2ov3g