

# **U.S.-Cuba-Canada Collaboration in Fighting COVID-19**

**-National Network On Cuba & Canadian Network On Cuba Campaign**

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COVID-19 is ravaging the United States. Day by day, hour by hour, the infected and fatalities continue to spiral ever upward, with the most vulnerable communities, especially African Americans, disproportionately affected. The entire healthcare system is strained beyond its capacity to provide adequate care and treatment, with doctors, nurses and other healthcare workers driven to exhaustion and beyond in their valiant efforts to save lives.

A pandemic is by definition global. Surely, in the face of this worldwide menace, now is the time for international medical cooperation and solidarity? A time for joint efforts to confront COVID-19. A time to put political differences aside in order to save lives. It is for this reason, that we are launching a campaign to call for medical collaboration with Cuba, to gain access to Cuban medical expertise to assist in fighting COVID-19.

Many countries are now drawing on Cuba's expertise in fighting COVID-19. At the time of writing, Cuba has more than 1,200 medical personnel serving in more than 20 countries, including especially hard-hit Italy. In the coming days and weeks more Cuban medical missions will be dispatched to other countries. These missions reflect Cuba's long history of medical internationalism. Many of the medical personnel now intimately involved in the fight against COVID-19 are part of the specially trained Henry Reeve International Medical Brigade against Disasters and Serious Epidemics, which distinguished itself in the fight against the Ebola epidemic in West Africa.

Cuba also offers treatment regimens, some of which are not available in the United States and Canada. A key component of the protocols being used on the island and in the medical missions is Cuba's Interferon Alfa 2B Recombinant (IFNrec). While IFNrec is not a panacea, preliminary reports are promising, pointing to IFNrec's efficacy (combined with other drugs) in treating COVID-19. In the recently published extensive medical handbook by Zhejiang University School of Medicine in China on how to treat COVID-19, IFNrec is a crucial component of the anti-viral treatment to combat the coronavirus. It's also used as a preventative measure to protect healthcare workers from contagion. At least 45 countries have sought to use IFNrec for confronting the COVID-19 pandemic.

***We call on the U.S. and Canadian governments to lift restrictions on access to Cuban medical expertise, including the importation of IFNrec, in order to more effectively combat the COVID-19 pandemic.***

A precedent for this opening and cooperation has already been established by the joint venture--facilitated by New York Governor Andrew Cuomo--between Cuba's Centre for Molecular Immunology and Buffalo's Roswell Park Comprehensive Cancer Center in developing CIMAvax, the Cuban lung cancer vaccine. There was also the collaboration between medical personnel from Cuba and the University of Illinois on infant-mortality in Chicago. This campaign will also benefit Canada, particularly, Indigenous peoples and Black communities that are the most at risk from COVID-19. For example, the Canadian government has turned down the request for Cuban doctors by the Southern Chiefs' Organization, representing the Anishinaabe and Dakota First Nations in southern Manitoba.

Join and support us in this call for medical collaboration with Cuba. Cuban medical expertise can and will save lives. Cuban Foreign Minister Bruno Rodríguez stated: "Humanity faces a common challenge. This pandemic does not respect borders or ideologies. It threatens the lives of all, and it is everyone's responsibility to address it."

**Specifically, we call for:**

- 1. Allowing U.S.-Cuba-Canada medical, clinical and scientific collaboration, including inviting Cuban medical brigades to provide direct medical assistance and/or to provide advice and guidance in treating COVID-19.**
- 2. Incorporating Cuba's Interferon Alfa 2B Recombinant in clinical trials in the U.S., Canada and the WHO, and the granting by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration approval for Cuba's Interferon Alfa 2B Recombinant.**
- 3. Ending U.S. economic and travel sanctions against Cuba, including its extraterritorial nature and the attempts to stop all other countries accepting Cuban medical brigades and assistance, and all ongoing measures that prevent Cuba accessing and importing medical equipment and medicines to confront COVID-19.**

*Please endorse this campaign at: [savinglives@us-cubanormalization.org](mailto:savinglives@us-cubanormalization.org) Use this letter by sharing and sending it to medical personnel, unions, elected officials, community, faith-based and political organizations.*

**YES, I/MY ORGANIZATION ENDORSES THIS CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND US-CUBA-CANADA MEDICAL COLLABORATION.**