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HOUSE OF COMMONS  
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15 April 2020

The Rt Hon Dominic Raab MP  
First Secretary of State  
Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office  
King Charles Street  
London  
SW1A 2AH

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We are writing to ask the British government to join the growing international call for the US administration to temporarily suspend its blockade of Cuba during the global COVID-19 pandemic.

As of 13 April, Cuba has more than 700 confirmed cases of coronavirus and 21 people have died. Like Britain, the island's health professionals are working hard to save the lives of its population. At the same time, the country faces shortages of medical equipment and medicines as a direct result of US policy. At the beginning of April, a consignment of coronavirus aid, including ventilators, masks and test kits provided by the Chinese Alibaba Foundation could not be delivered, as the freight company feared fines by the US Treasury Department.

Despite difficulties in obtaining medical equipment to fight COVID-19, Cuba has provided humanitarian support to many other countries during the crisis. The island has sent more than 700 doctors and nurses to seventeen countries including Italy, Andorra, St Lucia and Jamaica to support the overwhelmed health services in these nations.

In March, Cuba allowed the British cruise ship MS Braemar to dock so that infected passengers could be flown home. You will remember that you thanked the Cuban government for their assistance, stating in parliament that "we are very grateful to the Cuban government for swiftly enabling this operation and for their close cooperation to make sure it could be successful."

On 2 April, Dr Anthony Stokes, British ambassador to Cuba, sent a letter expressing British thanks for the "great gesture of solidarity" by the 43 Cubans who had helped with the evacuation of the passengers and had just returned home safely after a 14-day quarantine period.

Michelle Bachelet, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former president of Chile, stated in March that US sanctions "should be eased or suspended" as they limit countries' ability to provide medical care and increase the risk that the virus will spread.


Spanish Foreign Minister Arancha González has also given Spain's support to the call by the UN Secretary General for countries to be exempted from sanctions in order to receive humanitarian aid.

On 3 April, Josep Borrell, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs, stressed "that sanctions should not impede the delivery of essential equipment and supplies necessary to fight the coronavirus and limit its spread worldwide."

Several international public petitions have gained thousands of signatures in support of this call, including a UK-based open letter to the British government signed by almost 15,000 people.

We join these international calls for the US blockade to be temporarily suspended to allow humanitarian aid to be delivered. We ask that the British government joins other governments in making a public statement to this effect and raises it directly with US government counterparts.

Yours sincerely,



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Chair, APPG Cuba

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