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Cuba helps fight Ebola

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In a stellar example of solidarity with the people of West Africa, socialist Cuba will provide health care workers to aid in the urgent fight against the Ebola epidemic in the region.

Cuban Health Minister Roberto Morales announced on Sept. 12, at a joint press conference with World Health Organization Director General Margaret Chan in Geneva, that his country would send 165 doctors, nurses and infectious disease experts to Sierra Leone.

This is “the biggest commitment of personnel to the health crisis so far by any country,” said Chan. Even as some countries have committed funds or small treatment centers, she stresses, “The thing we need most of all is people, health care workers.” (New York Times, Sept. 13)

To date, more than 2,400 people have died in the Ebola outbreak, and 4,784 cases have been reported in West Africa. The virus is spreading quickly; half of the cases and half of the deaths have occurred in the last three weeks, making this an increasingly urgent situation.

WHO estimates that 20,000 people could be affected and says existing medical resources are woefully inadequate to deal with the epidemic. This is a crisis of such magnitude that it requires a massive global response.

Ebola is spreading in the poorest countries, whose resources have been ravaged, and their economies deliberately underdeveloped by Western capitalist countries. This has affected their health care systems, which are grossly underfunded and ignored by imperialist governments, including the United States. These same countries outrageously pour billions of dollars and personnel into military interventions in Africa to protect their economic interests.

Yet, small, socialist Cuba, with a population of only 11 million and one-tenth the per-capita income of the richer capitalist countries, is taking the lead and demonstrating what should be done to aid the peoples of Western Africa.

The Caribbean nation is showing the world what socialist consciousness and international solidarity mean and how they are concretely manifested.

Global solidarity is intrinsic to the 1959 Cuban Revolution. Since then, Cuba has aided scores of countries, including Haiti, where medical aid workers have been essential in fighting the cholera epidemic.

Granma, the newspaper of Cuba's Communist Party, quotes Morales, "At present, Cuban health workers, including over 2,500 doctors, are offering their services in 32 African countries." (Sept. 12)

Socialist ideals permeate Cuba. The revolution's main priorities are not only the health and well-being of its own people. In the spirit of internationalism, expressions of solidarity and concrete assistance are extended to the world's workers and oppressed peoples.

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