
'Homeland is humanity': Cuban doctor uses poet's words to describe work helping quake victims in Türkiye

By: Muhammed Enes Calli
25/02/2023



KAHRAMANMARAS, Türkiye

Being thousands of miles from the epicenter of earthquakes is not an obstacle to rendering voluntary medical service to victims.

A 32-member Cuban medical team has been working since they arrived in Kahramanmaras province Feb. 12, six days after devastating twin quakes hit southern Türkiye.

The team operates and is stationed at the Kahramanmaras Necip Fazil City hospital in the Dulkadiroglu district.

Dr. Juan Carlos Dupuy Nunez, who is in charge of the

team, told Anadolu that his group has 28 doctors and nurses --19 in different specialties that provide service to three locations in Kahramanmaras.

"We started to take care of a patient in our intensive care unit on the first day we arrived. All of the patients have been the victims of the earthquakes directly or indirectly," he said.

Nunez said the team takes care of patients with mostly orthopedic issues and children with respiratory issues.

"We had a patient who was over a hundred years old and had diabetes, but after the earthquake, his condition got worse. We managed to stabilize him and saved his life. Turkish and Cuban orthopedic surgeons together took care of patients who suffered from traumas," he said.

The Cuban team has treated more than 2,500 patients and is still counting.

"We have seen that the Turkish health personnel is qualified at the top level, and thanks to this, we have been able to successfully do our duty here," said Nunez.

The team is grateful for the opportunity to participate in international aid and to respond to disasters.

"We would like to especially thank the Turkish state and people for the hospitality they have shown us here. We are ready to do our best to be here with you for as long as needed," he said.

Cubans are among several foreign medical staff that

rushed to help Türkiye's from thousands of miles after the quakes struck Feb. 6 and killed thousands.

'Homeland is humanity'

An intensive care specialist, Jorge Rodríguez Salas told Anadolu about a patient who is one of the few unusual experiences that he has treated during his career.

"A victim was brought to our intensive care unit. We only knew that the patient had surgery but did not have further information. We started the victim's treatment but we didn't even know the patient has cancer. Later, the doctor, who underwent the patient's surgery, arrived here," he said.

"His family had also been looking for him since the earthquake occurred as they had thought he would be in another city. We then were able to access the patient's entire health background and started collaborating with the surgeon," said Rodríguez Salas.

He said there is no nationality for doctors in intensive care.

"We worked together as a human. I would like to explain this situation with the lines of our poet Jose Marti: Homeland is humanity," he said.

He said disasters bring out the best and worst parts of people.

"Our experience here has revealed the best, solidarity and sensitive side of us," he added.

Pediatrician Alemy Paret Rodriguez has been impressed by the way Turks and the country's medical personnel welcomed the Cuban team.

"It amazed me how the local people, children, health workers, and officials welcomed us in the villages we have been in despite the gravity of the situation they lived in," she said. "They always gave us a smile and hospitality."

More than 44,200 people have been killed in the quakes that hit southern provinces.

The 7.7- and 7.6-magnitude quakes were centered in Kahramanmaras and struck 10 other provinces -- Adana, Adiyaman, Diyarbakir, Elazig, Hatay, Gaziantep, Kilis, Malatya, Osmaniye and Sanliurfa.
