

The fight against COVID-19 necessitates the lifting of the US blockade against Cuba



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Letter to: Kenneth G Forslund, Chairperson of the Swedish Parliamentary Committee on Foreign Affairs

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The cruelty of the U.S. sanctions against Cuba is totally exposed now during the Corona pandemic that has hit all countries.

A long range of countries and leaders have demanded that these sanctions must stop: the governments of China, Russia, Argentina, Venezuela and Spain, members of the parliaments of the United Kingdom, France and Japan, the General Secretary of the United Nations António Guterres and the UN Commissioner of Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food Hilal Elver, the Pope, the World Council of Churches and the Latin American Parliament are amongst those behind this demand.

The demand is also raised within the USA itself by amongst others the New York Times, the Financial Times, a group of senators, the National Council of Churches and a long line of organizations that represent Cubans resident in the USA.

Covid-19 accentuates the enormous hardships that the US blockade subjects Cuba to:

- The blockade hinders Cuba's purchases of medicines, medical equipment and materials that are needed to combat the pandemic. It creates difficulties when Cuba needs to take loans and also when Cuba is offered international aid. For example a western aircraft that carried medical personal protection equipment from China was stopped and could not make the delivery to Cuba as the airline company was scared of being sanctioned by the USA.
- The blockade hinders purchases of materials and products that have a content of more than

10 percent that originates from the USA. Please note that US transnational companies have a dominating position amongst producers of medical equipment in the world. For example Cuba's purchase of medical ventilators from the producers in Switzerland was stopped because of the blockade when the two companies in Switzerland were taken over by a U.S. company.

- Donations to Cuba are made difficult or completely stopped by the blockade's interference in the normal activity of banks, shipping companies and airlines.
- The extreme measures pressuring insurance companies, shipbuilders and shipping companies that the USA introduced 2019, hinder Cuba's import of fuel and create serious damage to the function and capacity of Cuba's health system.
- The incessant U.S. fines against Cuba's trading partners create difficulties for commercial exchange with Cuba, including the purchase of medical equipment and materials.

It should be noted that Cuba showed solidarity when the USA was hit by the terror attack the 11th of September 2001 and when the hurricane Katrina struck southern U.S.A. 2005.

In brief, the health disaster that the pandemic is, becomes drastically worsened by the U.S. blockade and the sanctions Cuba is subjected to. Furthermore, these are more far-reaching, harsher and are applied more uncompromisingly than ever before during the 60 years of the blockade. It is an inhuman and cruel punishment of 11 million Cubans. Moreover, the sanctions against Cuba create difficulties for Cuba's international medical aid which has recently been requested also by European countries - Italy and Andorra ? to help fight the pandemic.

Considering the need to be united behind the UN and the struggle against the pandemic, the US blockade against Cuba must be halted, at least during the pandemic. The USA must follow international law and the decisions of the UN General Assembly. 28 consecutive years the General Assembly has condemned the blockade and demanded it be ended. The world community is united behind this demand. Last time in the UN it was only the USA, Israel and Brazil that voted against this demand.

The elected representatives of Sweden need to:

- In their contacts with the U.S.A. demand that the blockade against Cuba now during the pandemic be immediately lifted.
- Within the European Union, act to get the EU to pressure the U.S.A. on the matter.
- Take action to protect Swedish companies, organizations and individuals that are targeted by the U.S.A's Cuba sanctions and fines.

Swedish-Cuban Association

Zoltan Tiroler, President

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