

Speech by Bruno Rodríguez Parilla, Cuban Minister of Foreign Affairs, at the Haiti Donors Meeting

“Generosity and Political Will is Needed”

Mr. President,

The international community has a tremendous debt with Haiti where, after three centuries of colonialism, the first social revolution on the American continent took place, an act of boldness that the colonial powers punished with close to 200 years of military dictatorships and plunder. Its noble and hardworking people are now the poorest in the Western hemisphere.

We all have the moral obligation to contribute additional financial resources and greater cooperation to Haiti, not only for its reconstruction but, in particular, for its development.

In order to have an idea of the magnitude of the human tragedy in Haiti, suffice it to note that the death of 230,000 people in its small and high-density population, is equivalent to the death of more than 30 million people in a country such as China, whose population reaches a total of 1.3 billion inhabitants; an unimaginable tragedy.

In the wake of this devastating earthquake that shook the conscience of humanity, we trust that the numerous promises heard will be converted into action, that Haiti’s independence and sovereignty will be respected and ennobled, that the government of President René Préval and Prime Minister Jean Max Bellerive will be facilitated to exercise all its faculties, and that it will be able to benefit, not the whites and foreign companies, but the Haitian people, especially the



Cuban and Cuban-trained doctors staff the OFATMA Social Security Hospital in Port-au-Prince.

poorest.

Generosity and political will is needed. Also needed is the unity of that country instead of its division into market plots and dubious charitable projects.

The program for the reconstruction and strengthening of the Haitian national healthcare system, drawn up by the Haitian government and Cuban governments, with the cooperation of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and other countries and humanitarian organizations, will guarantee wide health coverage for the population, in particular the low-income sector.

That program is based on 101 primary healthcare centers which are being created, at which an estimated 2.8 million patients will be treated, 1.3 million emergency operations performed, 168,000 babies delivered, and 3 million vaccinations administered every year.

These health centers will be supported by the services of 30 community reference hospitals distributed throughout the country and equipped with cutting-edge technology for secondary attention, which can treat 2.154

million people per year, perform 54,000 operations – 1 million of these emergency surgery –, 276,000 electro-cardiograms, 144,000 diagnostic ultrasounds, 43,000 endoscopies, 181,000 X-Rays, 107,000 dental examinations, and 487,000 laboratory tests.

Given the extraordinary number of poly-traumatized patients, 30 rehabilitation rooms are likewise being equipped which, within 12 months, will provide services for 520,000 patients

and 2.4 million therapeutic treatments.

There will also be three electromedicine centers, a prosthesis laboratory and an integral hygiene and epidemiology program.

Also planned is a Haitian National Specialties Hospital at tertiary level, involving co-operation from other countries, directed by 80 high-level Cuban specialists responsible for services and clinical departments, research and teaching, and Haitian professionals who will be trained at the institution and progressively replace the Cuban medical professors.

The cost of the already mentioned services will amount to \$690.5 million over 10 years, a total that includes the medical services provided, calculated at 50% of international prices; the sustainability of these services and the personnel providing them; and the training of a further 312 Haitian doctors in Cuba.

As can be deduced, the approximate cost is \$170 million per year for a country of approximately 9.33 million inhabitants.

It is possible to do this. Our practical experience confirms it. In fact, this program is already underway and, post-quake, 23 of these primary care health centers, 15 community reference hospitals and 21 rehabilitation rooms are up and running.

From almost immediately after the earthquake, Cuban specialists have been dedicating their attention to the population affected. To date they have seen 260,000 patients, performed more than 7,000 operations, delivered close to 1,400 babies, and administered close to 100,000 vaccinations. More than 50,000 patients have undergone rehabilitation therapy and more than 75,000 children have received psychosocial therapy, in the presence of some of Cuba’s most eminent professionals.

A total of 783 Cuban and 481 Haitian doctors, plus 278 health professionals from 28 countries – all of them graduated in Cuba – are working on this program.

Last Saturday [March 27], as part of the program outlined, a memorandum of understanding for the strengthening of the healthcare and public services system and epidemiological prevention was signed in Port-au-Prince, thanks to the will of the Haitian government and a significant contribution from President Lula and Brazil, which will be decisive for the planned healthcare program.

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Nothing Has Changed:

OCCUPATION IS THE CAUSE OF CRISIS IN IRAQ

The change in focus is intentional. By shifting from Iraq to Afghanistan, major media outlets like CNN, CBC and BBC that are mouthpieces for the US, Canada and UK governments are hoping to draw our attention away from Iraq, giving the impression that things are now more or less stable and under control. But beyond the narrow view afforded by the lens of the major media, what is life like for Iraqi people?

Is Iraq an Issue?

“Operation Iraqi Freedom” was the promising name given the US-led mission in Iraq when bombs first started pounding the country in 2003. Iraqis, the invaders claimed, would soon be liberated from the dictator Saddam Hussein and could look forward to a better life brought to them by US and UK forces.

Fast-forward to 2010. The war has cost nearly 1.5 million Iraqi lives, plus the lives of more than 4600 foreign troops. 4.5 million people are now refugees inside or outside Iraq (Iraq Displacement and Statistics Assessment 2007). In financial terms, more than \$3 trillion has been spent on the war by the US alone. This is the heavy price of “freedom” in

Iraq. But now that all these dollars and lives have been spent, is the war at least over? Can Iraqis now be considered free? Both the statistics and the bombed-out shells of buildings shout a resounding “no”.



Protest against the occupation in Najaf, Iraq. April 9, 2010.

Sahar Kadum, a resident of Kut, Iraq, expressed the view of many Iraqis in a November 20, 2009 interview with the New York Times. “Where is the reconstruction?” he asked. “The city is sleeping on hills of garbage.” The horrifying effects of depleted uranium and other chemical weapons have so far been documented primarily in southern Iraq.

However, the contamination is expected to spread through Iraq’s soil and waterways, affecting the entire population. But these diseases are not a mere side effect of the war – they are a lasting legacy. Depleted uranium remains radioactive, and therefore a threat to human life, for 4.5 billion years. The rich, fertile land of Iraq which was once known as ‘the cradle of humanity’ is now a death sentence for humanity.

In September 2009, Fallujah General Hospital had 170 new born babies, 24% of whom were dead within the first seven days, a staggering 75% of the dead babies were classified as deformed. On February 1st, 2010, the Iraqi Ministry of Human Rights announced that it will file a lawsuit against Britain

and the US over the use of depleted uranium. Whatever the outcome of the case is, one thing is sure: it cannot even begin to make up for the crimes against humanity that have been committed, and continue to be committed, in Iraq.

The New Era of War and

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SATURDAY & SUNDAY JUNE 26TH & 27TH 2010 - VANCOUVER, CANADA

3RD ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL CHE GUEVARA CONFERENCE

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Afghan Message is Clear: US/CANADA/NATO OUT NOW!

If you walk down the streets of Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, today, you would notice that much has changed since the 2001 US/Canada/NATO invasion and occupation of the country. There are many new things in the capital: new malls that few other than foreigners can shop in, new billboards advertising cell phones that most Afghans could never dream of owning, new flashy hotels where foreign investors and diplomats stay.

There is also new poverty. Thousands of refugees displaced by the occupation live in refugee camps on the outskirts of Kabul. Poverty has a new face, too. In addition to skyrocketing rates of opium addiction across Afghanistan that have come with the occupation, intravenous drug use has shown up for the first time, bringing with it at least hundreds, probably thousands of cases of

HIV and AIDS – a disease previously unheard of in Afghanistan.

For Afghan women in particular, the situation is dire. Many who have lost husbands and sons to war are forced into prostitution in order to survive. Others must sell their children. A 2009 human rights assessment of Afghanistan by Canada's foreign affairs department noted that, "Self-immolation [committing suicide by lighting oneself on fire] is being used by increasing numbers of Afghan women to escape their dire circumstances and women constitute the majority of Afghan suicides." This has left many Afghan women wondering "is this the freedom that the West – US, Canada and NATO – were supposed to bring us?"

Moving to rural Afghanistan, where 80 percent of the population lives, the situation is also grim. Promises by the occupa-

tion forces to bring security and development have been crushed by the thousands of 500-pound bombs being dropped on Afghan villages. Wedding parties have been a favourite target of the bombers. The UN states that 2009 was the worst year for civilian casualties in Afghanistan.

Beyond the thousands of soldiers, tanks, helicopters and bombs, though, little has changed. The occupation has brought with it virtually no development beyond a few schools and clinics for show in some major population centres. The main hospital in Kandahar province, Mirwais, is severely overcrowded and without basic supplies like antiseptic and oxygen. In most rural areas, a doctor is hours or days away.

Even the simple and basic necessity of water has not been provided by the occupation forces. Three-quarters of the Afghan population is still without access to safe drinking water, despite the fact that hundreds of wells could be built for the cost of sending even one soldier to Afghanistan. Similarly, only 13% of the country has access to improved sanitation, another basic need. Adding up the destruction and broken promises of development, it is little wonder that more and more Afghans are turning against the occupation.

With Obama's announcement of the troop surge in Afghanistan came the announcement of a new focus of war against the people of Pakistan. A major part of the aim of the troop surge was not only to stop the resistance in Afghanistan, but also to crush the growing resistance in Pakistan. Three million Afghan refugees live across the border in Pakistan, and Afghanistan and Pakistan also share a huge cultural connection through the large Pashtun population that lives on both sides of the Afghanistan-Pakistan border. As the war in Afghanistan has intensified, killing more civilians and destroying more communities, resistance to this war has grown among the Afghan refugee and Pashtun populations of Pakistan as well. In 2008, the US began attacks on this resistance movement through bombings by unmanned drone planes. These bombings have killed over 1000 Pakistani people, including many women and children. Rather than crushing the resistance in Pakistan, though, these bombings have only added fuel to the fire, as opposition grows to the US presence in Pakistan.

Canada's shameful role in the occupation of Afghanistan was recently brought into the international spotlight with the scandal of Canada's involvement in torturing Afghan detainees. In November 2009, Canadian diplomat Richard Colvin brought testimony before Parliament that he became aware in 2006 while serving in Afghanistan that all Afghans captured by Canadian Forces

and turned over to Afghan authorities faced torture. Mr. Colvin testified that many of these people were innocent, and noted that Canadian Forces took in six times as many prisoners as British troops, also serving in Afghanistan with a larger force. "[The detainees] were picked up... during routine military operation, and on the basis typically not of intelligence [reports] but suspicion or unproven denunciation... Many were just local people: farmers, truck drivers, tailors, peasants – random human beings in the wrong place at the wrong time," Colvin testified. Many of these detainees have simply 'disappeared', and although there are no official records, it is likely the worst has happened to them.

Mr. Colvin's repeated reports to over 70 various government and military officials were ignored, and it was not until October 2007, after coming under fire from various human rights organizations, that action was taken to stop this – sending one monitor to overlook the transfer of detainees.

This torture scandal, which has shocked many, has revealed the true face of Canada's mission in Afghanistan. The exactly who was involved in the torture is not the question of importance here. By occupying the country and capturing detainees, Canada's occupation forces were providing the situation but letting others do their dirty work. Opposition parties in Canada's parliament have called for a public inquiry into the alleged torture. What we need is not just a government-sanctioned public inquiry into this situation, but an *independent* public inquiry into Canada's involvement in Afghanistan as a whole. Working people in Canada have a right to know why thousands of troops, thousands of lives and billions of taxpayer dollars have been poured into the mission in Afghanistan without public consultation or debate. We must also demand an end to Canada's involvement in the occupation of Afghanistan – *now*. Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper claims that Canadian soldiers will be pulled out of Afghanistan in December 2011. Whether this happens remains to be seen, since the mission in Afghanistan has already been extended three times. But even if Canada's official military presence in Afghanistan ends in 2011, even Harper acknowledges there will still be a significant Canadian military presence in Afghanistan in other forms. For our Afghan brothers and sisters who have suffered for now nearly a decade at the hands of US, Canada and NATO troops, a partial troop withdrawal does not equal an end to the occupation. We must follow the clear message of the Afghan people and demand:

Canada/US/NATO Out of Afghanistan Now!
Self-determination for Afghanistan Now!

"Occupation is the cause of crisis in Iraq"

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Occupation

Make no mistake: the crisis in Iraq is not over. Iraq is not secure and will not be secure after the last election in March. The occupation is not ending. In a November 2009 "Iraq Security Trends" report from US-based think-tank the Center for Strategic and International Studies, it was stated that "The current levels of violence remain too high for the US to simply carry out a 'responsible withdrawal,' and go to a 'normal embassy' in 2012. The US will need to create strong military and State Department advisory teams to help Iraq's armed forces, police forces, and security forces continue to improve. It will need to continue to provide aid to develop Iraqi forces, and make significant transfers of the military equipment now in Iraq. It will need to sustain aid in improving Iraq's rule of law, and in improving the quality and sustainability of Iraqi forces at least through 2014 – and probably for years in the future."

Troops Out Now!

There is no 'exit strategy' for Iraq. In fact, the plan for Iraq is to "stabilize" the country in US interests for a long-term US military presence in the region. The last eight years of occupation have brought nothing but horror and destruction to the Iraqi people – anyone who cares about human lives and human dignity must shudder to think what an occupation long into the foreseeable future will bring.

It is our responsibility as human beings to demand an immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Iraq. This has been the demand of the Iraqi people for seven years now, and now more than ever is the time for us to echo it in Canada, the US and around the world.

US Out of Iraq!

Self-Determination for Iraq!

Troops Home Now!

"Generosity and Political Will is Needed"

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During the 11 years of work prior to the earthquake, the Cuban medical brigade, which has a presence in 127 of the 137 Haitian communes, saved 223,442 lives, treated 14 million people, performed 225,000 operations and delivered 109,000 babies. Via the Operation Miracle program, 46,000 Haitians have had their sight restored or improved. During the same period, 165,000 Haitians have become literate in Creole.

If we evaluate the medical services provided in these 11 years and the training of medical personnel in Cuba, it would represent \$400 million throughout the period.

The medical program that we are proposing, in its entirety, will benefit 75% of the poorest population of the country at a minimum expense.

We invite all governments, without exception, to contribute to this noble effort. For that reason, we attribute particular importance to this conference, and aspire to its success.

Thank you very much.

New York, 31 March, 2010

Translated by Granma International




Anti-war protest, Los Angeles on the 6th anniversary of the invasion of Iraq. March 20, 2010.

FREE PUBLIC FORUM



Haiti

Three Months After the Earthquake:
Where it is and Where is it Going?



6:30pm

Joos Cafe
Large North Hall
1150 Commercial Drive

Wednesday April 21

Mobilization Against War and Occupation (MAWO)
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