



Cuba Solidarity Forum Ireland **NEWS**

End the blockade

Just a week before leaving the White House in January, the Trump administration in the US re-designated Cuba as a “state sponsor of terrorism”, imposing further sanctions on its island neighbour. The decision was clearly intended to influence and restrict the commitment by President Joe Biden to normalise relations with Cuba.

Biden served as vice-president when former President Barack Obama removed Cuba from the so-called “terror list”, restored diplomatic relations and eased the destructive economic blockade imposed by the US for almost six decades.

Reversing one of Obama’s most significant foreign policy initiatives, the Trump administration, during its term, applied 240 sanctions which damaged all sectors of the Cuban economy and cost it \$5.5 billion last year alone. The blockade and sanctions also made it more difficult for the government to purchase essential medicines and equipment during its efforts to combat the Covid-19 virus.

Announcing the decision, out-going Secretary of State Mike Pompeo cited Cuba’s support for the Venezuelan leader, Nicolas Maduro and its refusal to extradite a number of commanders of the Colombian ELN from its country as reasons. Cuba refuted allegations that it assisted terrorism in any country, including in Venezuela, and said that the presence of the ELN leaders was in accordance with protocols set down during the peace process it brokered in Colombia over recent years.

President Miguel Díaz-Canel said his country was the victim of terrorism, referring to an armed attack on its embassy in Washington last April as one recent example.

The Cuban president said the inclusion of his country on the blacklist was helping the US justify the long-standing embargo on the island and other economic sanctions that have crippled its economy. Under the latest moves, most travel and remittances from the US to Cuba will be stopped.

Over the past two decades, Venezuela has sent important oil shipments to Cuba and, in turn, has received tens of thousands of employees, including medical workers to assist with the



Photo from left: President Michael D Higgins, Cuban president Miguel Díaz-Canel with his wife Lis Cuesta Peraza and Sabina Higgins in Áras an Uachtaráin, October 2019.

Cuba Solidarity Forum Ireland

The Cuba Solidarity Forum Ireland (CSFI) was formed to strengthen the bonds between Cuba and Ireland. The CSFI will encourage greater co-operation and friendship through cultural, political and economic exchanges of the peoples of Ireland and Cuba.

Ireland and Cuba have a shared and rich history of resistance to colonial occupation and oppression. CSFI will assist the Cuban people in the assertion of their political and economic independence, including in their struggle against the unjust and continuing blockade imposed by the US.

The campaign will work with colleagues in the Embassy of Cuba in Dublin, and with ICAP (The Cuban Institute for Friendship with the Peoples in Havana and their Northern Europe affiliates).

Cuba Solidarity Forum Ireland will develop and strengthen ties, where they already exist, with civic organisations, political parties, trade unions and government agencies in Ireland. It also aims to deepen political and cultural relations, as well as trade and tourism, between the two countries.

We welcome all our readers to join us in support of Cuba through the CSFI and ask you to spread the word and keep in touch. We will be developing policies and campaigns to strengthen our ties with the Cuban people and their representatives especially via ICAP and the Cuban Trade Union Confederation (CTC).

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Henry Reeves Medical Brigade

Cuban support groups worldwide have been asking for the Nobel Peace Prize of 2021 to be awarded to the Cuban Henry Reeves Medical Brigade. In recognition of its selflessness, generosity of spirit and humanism and for their ongoing, extraordinary medical expertise and dedication to humanity during this current Covid-19 pandemic. The Brigade has toiled in 74 countries in Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Latin America and the Caribbean, sometimes on more than one occasion when and where surges occurred. Prior to this pandemic the Cuban doctors worked tirelessly in Africa towards eliminating the dreaded Ebola virus and are always prepared to lend their expertise where natural disasters occur.

Cuba Support Forum Ireland has been spreading the word over recent months. Genuine efforts have been made to solicit nominations from eligible qualified individuals including politicians and academics to nominate this exemplary corps of Cuban educated medics.

More than 60 Irish people have advised us that they have submitted nominations for the Henry Reeves Medical Brigade for this prestigious award, the winner of which will be named in Oslo in October 2021.



Cuban doctors before they flew out to help Italian colleagues battle the Covid-19 virus, March 2020.

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development of its health and other public infrastructure and services.

Encouraged by Cuban-American and Venezuelan exiles in south Florida, who oppose the socialist government in Cuba and its support for Venezuela, the Trump administration increased restrictions on flights, trade and financial transactions between the U.S. and the island over the past four years.

Republican, Gregory Meeks, the new chairperson of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, said Trump's designation would not help the Cuban people and would only tie the hands of the Biden administration.

"This designation of Cuba as a state sponsor of terrorism with less than a week to go in his presidency and after he incited a domestic terror attack on the US Capital ... that's hypocrisy," Meeks said in an interview with The Associated Press.

Among those who called for the removal of Cuba from the US "terror list" was the Secretary General of the United Nations, Antonio Guterres.

The EU High Representative for Foreign Policy, Joseph Borrell, also urged US President Joe Biden to eliminate the economic and commercial blockade against Cuba.



"We very much regret Trump's decision to include Cuba in the list of countries that support terrorism. This decision was taken in the last hours of his term," Borrell stated in Moscow, during a joint press conference with his Russian counterpart, Sergey Lavrov. "We hope that the new administration will reverse it," he said.

As Ireland takes its seat on the UN Security Council, the leader of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions, Patricia King, also sought an end to the US blockade of Cuba.

In a letter to foreign minister, Simon Coveney, she said:

"We ask that you work towards the Biden administration reverting to the Obama position on Cuba and also to set out a timetable for the ending of the blockade and agreeing to discussions on matters of US and Cuban interest."

Visit to Dublin by Cuban President Miguel Diaz-Canel in 2019



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President Michael D Higgins said during the visit by Cuban president to Ireland in October 2019.

“Irish and Cuban people have in common a proud sense of their national identity, a passion for freedom and, in the past, both of our people have the shared experience of living in the shadow of a powerful neighbour. We are two island nations that carry our marks of that proximity and we carry the legacy of colonisation. We both have had to wrestle freedom from the grip of empires in order to achieve independence. This shared history has led Irish and Cuban people to easily forge many bonds of empathy and imagination, and to exchange stories, dreams and aspirations of freedom.”



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- 1 With members of the Cuban community in Ireland in Áras an Uachtaráin.
- 2 With President Michael D Higgins, Sabina Higgins and his wife Lis Cuesta Peraza in Áras an Uachtaráin.
- 3 With Cuban children in Ireland.
- 4 At Kilmainham Gaol.
- 5 With Cuban ambassador to Ireland Hugo Ramos and former TD, Maureen O'Sullivan.
- 6 In St. Stephen's Green with James Joyce statue.
- 7 From left Declan Kearney, Gerry Adams and Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald.

CSFI endorsements

“There is a need for more engagement between Ireland and Cuba - politically, economically, socially and culturally. I wish The Cuba Solidarity Forum Ireland well and hope it will contribute to that greater engagement, also a greater awareness in Ireland of Cuba.

I believe a priority has to be the Sanctions, to raise greater awareness of the illegality and immorality of the sanctions.

Le gach dea-ghuí.”

**Maureen O’Sullivan,
former TD**

“The Cuban people's determination to create a just and equal society, and a model of the New Human being that Che spoke of, has resulted in great achievements in health and education for the population of Cuba. They have in a spirit of true solidarity with the rest of the world generously shared their experience and human resources. They have truly shown, despite brutal opposition, that "Another World is Possible". I welcome and support the work of Cuba Solidarity Forum Ireland in strengthening the bonds of friendship between Cuba and Ireland, two island nations with so much in common.”

Dr. David Hickey

“We welcome the formation of CSFI and look forward to working in solidarity and co-operation with the courageous people of Cuba and against the unjust blockade imposed on them by US governments over so many decades.”

**Eugene McCartan,
General Secretary of Communist Party
of Ireland**

“Sinn Féin extends best wishes to the Cuban Solidarity Forum Ireland.

At this time of so many global challenges, international solidarity and co-operation are more important than ever.

Despite the pressures caused by the imposition of unjust sanctions, the role Cuba has played in providing practical solidarity and support to so many countries in the global struggle against Covid-19 has been exemplary.

The Cuban revolution is an enduring source of inspiration for freedom loving and progressive peoples across our world.

Sinn Féin will continue to act in solidarity with our friends in Cuba and is pleased to be associated with the work of the Cuban Solidarity Forum Ireland.”

**Declan Kearney,
Sinn Féin Chairperson**

“I have been a supporter of the Cuban peoples' plight for over 30 years and will continue to support them in any way possible. I welcome this initiative by the CSFI to open up a nationwide pathway and to keep the Irish people updated on the suffering being inflicted on Cuba by the intolerable US blockade. I personally witnessed the effects of the blockade during a Ministerial visit there in March 2019 and I understand how important it is for Cuba to have international support.”

**Finian McGrath,
former minister and TD**



“On behalf of the Labour Party I send support and good wishes to Cuban Solidarity Forum Ireland. The ongoing campaign to have all sanctions against the Republic of Cuba lifted will continue. Hopefully a new policy platform will be advanced by the Biden administration in the United States. The many friends of Cuba in Ireland particularly in the Labour Party and labour movement will continue to work to this objective.”

**Brendan Howlin,
Labour Party Foreign Affairs spokesperson**

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