Update on Cuba's Medical Mission in Portugal
February 2024

Excerpts from
"Forced/compelled labor (trafficking in persons) by the Cuban state: Information for the 2025 Trafficking in Persons Report for the Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, U.S. Department of State," Free Society Project/Cuba Archive, February 2024

Edited excerpts from "Update on selected countries": Portugal[1]

In July 2023, Cuba's president, Miguel Díaz-Canel, stopped in Portugal en route to a summit in Brussels of the European Union and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States. It was the first visit of a Cuban leader to that country. He arrived in Lisbon in the midst of a controversy over the plan to hire 300 Cuban doctors for three years to reinforce the battered Portuguese national health system, suffering from a serious lack of doctors. In his speech at the presidential palace, Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa defended hiring Cuban doctors and recalled that it had already happened in the past "with both left-wing and right-wing governments." He expressed his desire to strengthen relations between Portugal and Cuba and reiterated Portugal's historic rejection of the U.S. "blockade" suffered by Cuba. However, numerous public objections have been aired and, in an opinion article in *Publico*, analyst Pedro Norton wrote that there is "not the slightest shadow of freedom in this sordid exploitation of specialized migrants."[2] A date for the arrival of the Cuban doctors has not been announced.

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[1] "Portugal contratará 200 o 300 médicos de América Latina y dice que se respetarán sus derechos," *EFE/14ymedio*, Lisboa, Jul. 26, 2023; Tereixa Constenla, "El presidente cubano visita Portugal entre críticas por la contratación de médicos de la isla para la sanidad lusa," Lisboa, *El País*, Jul. 14, 2023.

[2] Pedro Norton, Médicos cubanos, liberdade e responsabilidade, *Publico*, Jul. 11, 2023.