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In Boston: Strategies against the blockade of Cuba being built

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NNOC co-chairs Shaquille Fontenot and Cheryl LaBash opened the annual conference. Photos by Bill Hackwell

Oct. 14 — They came to Boston, the capital of Massachusetts, from all over the country on their own resources. Some paid for overpriced plane tickets to this region of New England, some took buses, but regardless it was worth it because “Cuba is calling us,” as a young activist from Virginia told me.

Representatives of now 70 organizations (13 new groups joined at this meeting) are gathered here for the U.S. National Network of Solidarity with Cuba's (NNOC) annual conference to analyze, develop, and come up with new strategies. It also provides a renewed impetus to their main objective, which is to lift the economic, commercial, and financial blockade imposed for more than 60 years by both Democratic and Republican governments on the largest of the Antilles.

The meeting - under the slogan Victory in Unity - was also extended to those who could not attend in person through virtual participation from different U.S. cities.

The weekend events kicked off on Friday night with a Pan-African Forum coordinated by the African Studies Department of the University of Massachusetts, where the conference was hosted.

The meeting began this morning with a powerful intervention from the island by Fernando González, president of the Cuban Institute of Friendship with the Peoples (ICAP), who, in his words, recognized the value of the friends in the US who are committed to the struggle to lift the coercive measures that try to suffocate our people."

"We have to do everything we can to defend our Cuban family," said activist Gail Walker, a co-chair of the NNOC, speaking on a panel at the event that kicked off this morning and runs through Sunday at the University of Massachusetts Boston.

The executive director of the Interreligious Foundation for Community Organization (IFCO) highlighted the health internationalism of this Caribbean nation by saying, "We owe Cuba for the efforts it has made to train thousands of young people from 120 countries as doctors, who are not just any doctors. They are doctors trained in Cuba."



Cuban diplomats and professor Tony Vandermeer.

The meeting was attended by officials of the Cuban Embassy in Washington, D.C. Diplomat David Ramirez, who thanked the solidarity of the U.S. people who are in favor of the elimination of that unilateral siege that has lasted more than six decades. He stressed how the continuity in the current Democratic administration of the policies of Republican Donald Trump has exasperated the accumulative effect of shortages and the resulting misery to the Cuban people.

Ramirez pointed out the impact of those measures of asphyxiation against Cuba has on the number of people leaving in the last three years.

Before the business part of the meeting began, support for the cause of the Palestinian people in their historic struggle against the occupation of their lands by Israel and the horror of what is transpiring in Gaza was raised.



“Cuba is an example of true brotherhood with Palestine, shown especially through its medical internationalism,” said Calla Walsh, co-chair of NNOC.

Hundreds of Palestinians have studied to become doctors at the Latin American School of Medicine in Havana since the beginning of the century, the young activist recalled.

“They tell us that Cuba’s example of surviving more than 60 years of blockade and siege by the most powerful country in the world gives them hope that Palestine will also survive and live on,” she said.

Walsh quoted Professor Tony Vandermeer, who at the Pan-African Forum denounced the devastation caused by the current Israeli siege of Gaza, which has already left more than 1,600 dead and more than 7,000 injured since the escalation Israel unleashed, with all its U.S.-provided weaponry, against the Gaza Strip after the

surprise attack by the Islamic Resistance Movement (Hamas) into Israeli held territory on October 7.

Its open war against the Palestinian people has resulted in the daily bombardment of the Gaza Strip and a total blockade that aggravated the humanitarian crisis in this coastal enclave. Israel has now cut off water, electricity, and fuel services, as well as the entry of food and medicine, while now threatening to kill anyone who does not leave Gaza. This despite the fact that the people of Gaza have nowhere to go.



The Let Cuba Live campaign to gather a million signatures against the blockade and

the convening of the next international tribunal to be held in Brussels, Belgium, to denounce that hostile policy towards the Caribbean nation are some of the initiatives discussed by the delegates in the Saturday session.

The conference concludes on Sunday in this coastal city in the New England region, famous for its key role in the revolution for U.S. independence, with the NNOC coming out of it stronger, more united, and more determined.

As Cheryl LaBash, a co-chair of the NNOC, pointed out in a previous statement to Prensa Latina, if President Joe Biden listened to the voice of the American people, he would lift the economic, commercial, and financial blockade against Cuba because the majority of the people in this country are against it, along with the overwhelming majority of the people of the world

This is being concretely demonstrated by the 106 resolutions approved throughout the country by organizations representing more than 55 million people. LaBash concluded by saying, “We condemn Biden’s inhumane starvation strategy. He owns this cruelty now, not Trump.”

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