



## *Seminario Evangélico de Teología*

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### *SET Communiqué on the Current Situation in Cuba*

Dear sisters and brothers from SET partner Churches and Institutions,

We greet you in the name of our common Lord Jesus Christ and at the same time we thank you for your prayers and your expressions of concern related to the current situation in our country.

We are living an acute economic crisis and a crisis of values since the “special period” (decade of the 1990s) when the Soviet Union and socialist bloc collapsed; we have not yet recovered from those times. The crisis has become worse due to several factors.

On one hand, the aggressive policy of the governments of the United States against Cuba, particularly during the Donald Trump administration, which imposed 242 measures, most of them during the Covid-19 pandemic, against our people to try to smother us. On the past session of the General Assembly of the United Nations on June 23, 184 nations voted in favor of the Republic of Cuba against the blockade, with two votes against and three abstentions.

On the other hand, the Covid-19 pandemic that has brought negative consequences: the sad death of loved ones, which produces a great emotional impact on the people. Furthermore, the State loses millions of dollars above all due to the fall of tourism; despite that, it invests millions of dollars to try to heal and save the people. A significant example of that is the development of scientific research and the production of five vaccine candidates against Covid-19 (*Soberana 01, 02, Plus; Abdala and Mambisa*). Recently, Cuba authorized its *Abdala* vaccine in the midst of the worst outbreak of the pandemic. The project showed over 92 percent electivity in the application of three doses in the last stage of clinical trials, thus becoming the first Latin American vaccine. However, we are suffering a collapse of health institutions, particularly here in the province of Matanzas, the present epicenter of the pandemic, with dire scarcity of medicines.



Finally, the crisis has intensified because of the economic measures taken by the State at the beginning of this year. Even though salaries have increased and the government has reiterated the promise that no one will be defenseless, the truth is that the population has to pay five times more for food and electricity, water, gas, telephone and other services.

In the last few days, particularly the past Sunday, July 11, there have been disturbances, protests and vandalism, mainly caused by many of the accumulated dissatisfactions along

these years that have worsened in the last few months. Moreover, these dissatisfactions have been fueled and promoted from outside the country – in a very opportunistic way – as well as from within through the social media. Even though disturbances like those from last Sunday have stopped in the country, there is an uneasy calm.

As churches, we are interceding for our people, giving comfort, care, producing and sharing sense, offering messages of faith – strength and hope, as well as dialogue, reconciliation and peace with justice. In addition, we are offering solidarity and witness, making diaconal work or service – through the Living Waters project, helping and serving food for the vulnerable, and through laundry for the elderly people.



In the case of SET, last month the only Pediatric Hospital of the province of Matanzas exceeded its maximum capacity. The Ministry of Public Health of the province requested the help of the Seminary, to serve as an annex center of the Children’s Hospital to accommodate children who were considered suspicious of having contracted Covid-19 with their companions. We immediately agreed, following the long traditions of our institution of service to the civil society.

On June 20, we held a joint meeting, and both institutions worked intensely from that moment on to create the necessary conditions in the visitors’ building, ensuring the protection of the members of our community and the properties. We were able to fit out 120 capacities; some for those children positive to the disease and one accompanying parent; some for those who were suspicious of having it plus one accompanying parent. Besides, adults who are positive or suspicious of being positive to Covid-19 are also assisted here. We also host teams of 10 people, doctors and nurses for hospital aid. All capacities have been occupied since June 21, discharging those who recovered from the disease and transferring those who needed it to the Intensive Care Unit.

At present, 10 SET workers are working in the different areas. The kitchen team prepares food for 140 people every day including breakfast, lunch, dinner and two snacks. Even when the Ministry of Public Health is supplying with all the logistics, including foodstuff, SET offers the infrastructures, covering its expenses.

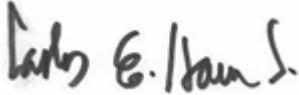
As to our teaching objectives, the Matanzas campus is closed at present and our Higher Ecumenical Institute of Sciences of Religions (ISECRE) continues working in virtual mode in the midst of “vacations”. We are getting ready to begin the new course 2021-2022 on August 30 and we are learning to conduct the process of teaching-learning in virtual mode and distance courses. To do this we have received help from partner institutions abroad that have graciously shared their vast experiences with us. We understand the great challenges we have ahead of us, i.e., the formation of renewed pastorate and leadership in the churches and other religious institutions serving in Cuba for the new times, for this *Kairos* of our nation, in a post-Covid period that will not be the same; and the proactive participation in the new society we are trying to build.

We greatly appreciate your consistent solidarity accompaniment through your prayers and through public advocacy to lift the blockade which damages directly our bilateral mission

relationships. The blockade hinders the possibility to send financial resources to our Seminary, including other countries because of its extraterritorial nature. We request an international campaign to oppose a military intervention against our country incited by politicians in that country, especially those of Cuban origin. We will be grateful for any donations of medicines and food, for which we will send indications in the next few days.

Gratefully,

Your brother in mission,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carlos E. Ham S." with a stylized flourish at the end.

Carlos E. Ham S.  
SET Principal

July 12, 2021