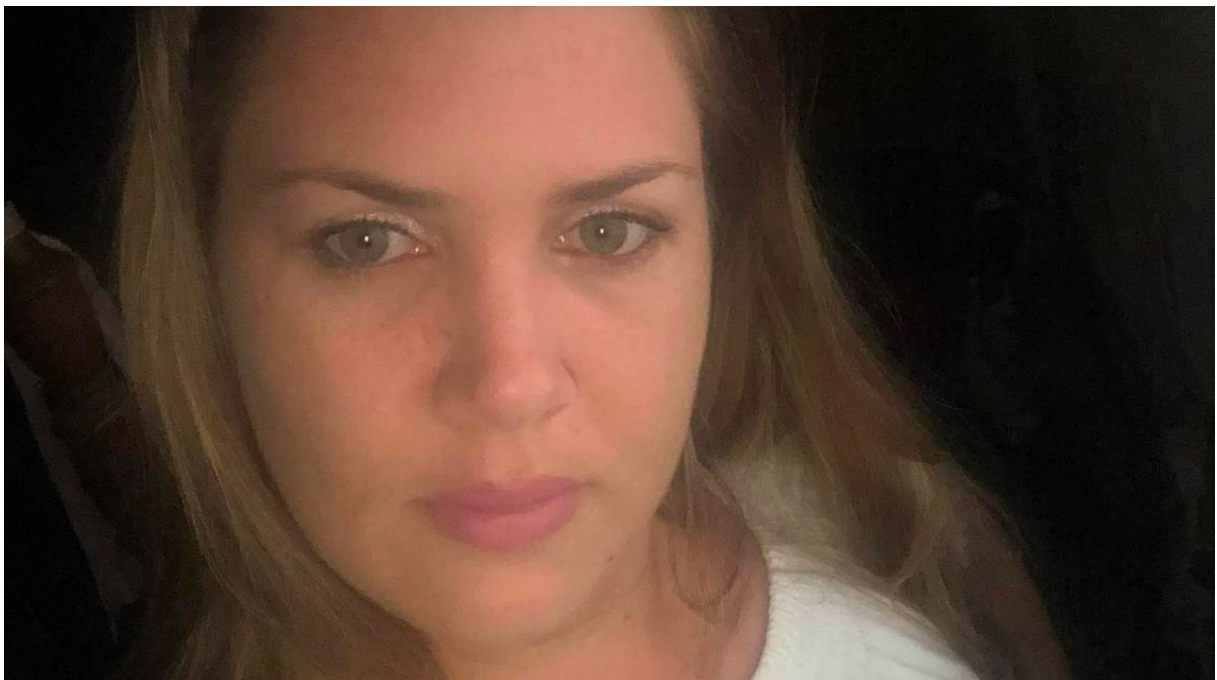# Gang releases kidnapped Cuban doctor in Haiti after receiving additional ransom

BY JACQUELINE CHARLES UPDATED JANUARY 24, 2022 5:20 PM
Miami Herald

A Cuban doctor kidnapped in Haiti by a gang in the Martissant neighborhood outside Port-au-Prince has been released after an additional $10,000 was paid in ransom. Daymara Helen Pérez Alabedra was abducted on Jan. 13 while riding a public bus headed to Port-au-Prince. Despite receiving an initial $10,000 in ransom payment, the gang refused to release her. She was finally released on Sunday, a friend and fellow physician told the Miami Herald, after another payment was made. In total, securing Pérez's freedom cost $20,000, which is more than any Cuban doctor sees while working outside of the island as part of the government's healthcare program. Cuban authorities said the doctor was no longer a member of its medical mission and decided to stay in Haiti after her contract through the Cuban government ended. The Cuban Embassy in Haiti also confirmed her release and said the doctor was in good health and had been in contact with her family in Cuba. Pérez's friend said she told him that she was kept in a room with four other hostages and that she was well treated.

Cuban doctor Daymara Helen Pérez Alabedra was released in Haiti, a fellow doctor confirmed.

"They gave her food, but she said she couldn't eat," the doctor said. Gangs in Martissant have been at war with each other since June, leading to the closure of at least two hospitals in the community and the forced displacement of more than 19,000 Haitians from their home. During her captivity Pérez had an up-close look at the fighting, her friend said. "They have a lot of guns and they were shooting all day," he said. Earlier this month, gang members in the same community hijacked a $38,000 generator while it was being delivered, and kidnapped the two drivers and trucks making the delivery. The equipment belonged to Sainte Croix Hospital in Léogâne, which was forced to close its doors because it could not rely on the government grid to provide it with electricity.

After the Miami Herald wrote about the plight of the 90-bed medical facility, which primarily functions as a maternity hospital and provides the only neonatal care in the region, readers responded and donated to the U.S.-based charity that helps keep the hospital afloat. The overwhelming response allowed the Medical Benevolence Foundation, which is continuing to raise funds, to purchase a new generator to reopen the hospital. On Thursday, Sainte Croix Hospital's doors reopened and one of its first patients was a mother in need of an emergency cesarean section, said Dr. Pierre Wilson Romestil, an obstetrician-gynecologist who has worked at the hospital for the past six years.

Miami Herald reporter Nora Gámez Torres contributed.