

## **URGENT HUMANITARIAN AID TO ENSURE THE RIGHTS TO HEALTH AND LIFE**

**CODEVIDA**, Coalition of Organizations for the rights to health and life, together with the group of organizations signing this document, requires the authorities of the Venezuelan government to take the urgent measures necessary to ensure that all persons in need of health care, including medicines, laboratory tests and availability of public health services, receive it in a timely manner.

The critical current economic situation and dependence of Venezuela's health system on raw materials and supplies from abroad, mean that even implementing immediately the urgent corrective measures that are needed, it will not be possible to guarantee health care to all people requiring it in less than 6 months.

Presently,

- Most public health centers, the only ones available for more than 60% of the population and mainly for low-income communities, do not have the conditions to ensure adequate minimal attention due to the decline of close to 70% of their means to provide diagnostic services, treatment and surgery; the loss of more than 50% of medical personnel and the precarious conditions of their infrastructure and equipment. This situation is also affected by Venezuela's lack of a legal and institutional framework integrating the health public health system, whose rectory is exercised in accordance with the constitutional and international obligations of the State to protect the rights to health and to life.
- More than 90% of essential drugs, medical supplies and spare parts needed throughout the health system, public and private, are imported and, between 2014 and 2015, the allocation of foreign funds, which is subject to exchange controls, fell by almost 50% for the health sector. This was done without taking the necessary measures to protect the population from shortages, which amounted in 2016 to 80% of the requirements at the national level. In regards to drugs, the process for restocking of inventories may take at least 6 months.
- Access to public information on health is not guaranteed, including epidemiological statistics. The latest official mortality data correspond to 2012, and data related to morbidity and mortality of mandatory notification correspond to 2014. The latter was reported last in February 2016, after its publication had been suspended for over a year. Health statistics show a steady increase in maternal and neonatal deaths, mortality from cancer, heart disease, cerebrovascular stroke and of those associated with AIDS, as well as in regards to cases of malaria and dengue, because of a systemic collapse of the programs and national health infrastructure.
- People with chronic conditions of physical and mental health, pregnant women and newborn children, people who require emergency interventions, people with HIV, people in remote areas and in urban areas of high poverty, those deprived of freedom, indigenous peoples and others affected by epidemics caused by vectors such as malaria and dengue fever, are suffering needlessly from the consequences of this critical situation, without information or the possibility of having solutions with the urgency required to safeguard their health and life.

Humanitarian aid is an appropriate and available mechanism to deal with this extreme situation, in a context of high fragility from the legal, institutional, social and economic points of view, and must be requested from international bodies having the necessary expertise to implement the delivery mechanisms of distribution and control of supplies, reagents and medicines, to ensure their quality, safety and efficacy, and in the necessary quantity to allow distribution based on the principles of universality, equality and non-discrimination. Humanitarian aid also includes medical personnel and other healthcare staff.

From the point of view of ensuring the rights to health and to life, the provision of supplies, reagents and medicines whose quality, safety and efficiency cannot be proven, is not acceptable; neither is it the distribution mechanisms based on selective rationing by age, sex, geographic location or type of health condition.

It is imperative that the national government calls for international humanitarian aid, as cases of suffering and preventable deaths due to lack of health care have become more and more evident, as much as the outbreaks of violence that are occurring in different states by frustration and despair resulting from the long lines and the inability to obtain or purchase drugs.

The Venezuelan government does not currently have the institutional capacity to respond to the urgent health care needs of the Venezuelan population. The numbers to which we referred above are the result of a fragmented public health system, with insufficient budget, seriously deteriorating infrastructure, poor water and electricity supply, inoperative or damaged equipment and insufficient staff, working in precarious conditions.

Moreover, at least in the medium term, the Venezuelan government does not have the capacity to meet all its financial commitments, which has a direct impact on its possibilities to make even the minimum required contributions, both to improve its internal institutional health capacity, as well as to finance, by itself, mechanisms for importing supplies, reagents and drugs, of proven quality, safety and efficacy, to guarantee immediately and sustainably the Venezuelan people's rights to health and to life.

However, as was established by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations, States must take steps to protect members of society, "to the maximum of the resources available", and this includes "those offered by the international community through international cooperation and assistance". The lack of domestic availability of resources does not exempt the Venezuelan State of its obligations to protect the rights to health and to life of the Venezuelan population.

international organizations that are part of the United Nations System, such as the World Health Organization (WHO), the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the Department of Humanitarian Aid of the European Union (ECHO), all with capacity to support the Venezuelan State in implementing humanitarian aid measures in health, have been informed about the seriousness of the situation currently affecting the Venezuelan population regarding the guarantees of their right to health. The Special Rapporteur for Health of the UN System of Protection of Human Rights has also been informed.

The Venezuelan Government, together with other public authorities, has the obligation to recognize the serious crisis in the health sector and to implement, with the support of the above-mentioned international institutions, the humanitarian aid measures that would allow it to immediately respond to the health care needs of the Venezuelan population, thus helping to ensure their rights to health and life. Failure to do so will make Government authorities responsible for more preventable loss of life and the suffering that the absence of responses continue to cause.

**CODEVIDA** and the group of other organizations signing this document, are willing to contribute, to the best of our ability, with every effort that involves overcoming the serious difficulties currently affecting the guarantee of the rights to health and life of the Venezuelan population.

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  - Acción Solidaria en VIH/Sida
  - Amigos Trasplantados de Venezuela
  - AVAL, Asociación Venezolana de Amigos con Linfoma
  - AVH, Asociación Venezolana para la Hemofilia
  - FUNCAMAMA
  - SenosAyuda
2. ACCSI, Acción Ciudadana Contra el SIDA
3. ACIVA, Asociación Civil Impulso Vital Aragua
4. Asamblea de Educación
5. Asociación Civil Ayúdame a Lograrlo
6. Asociación Civil Hepatitis C de Venezuela
7. Asociación Civil Humberto Da Silva - Enfermedades Genéticas Lisosomales
8. Asociación Civil Yo Reumático
9. AVEPEL, Asociación Venezolana de Pacientes con Enfermedades Lisosomales
10. AVESA, Asociación Venezolana para una Educación Sexual Alternativa
11. AVESOC, Asociación Venezolana de Servicios de Salud de Orientación Cristiana
12. Caritas de Venezuela
13. Cátedra de la Paz y Derechos Humanos Mons. Oscar A. Romero de la Universidad de Los Andes
14. CATESFAM – Caracas, Centro de Atención al Esquizofrénico y Familiares
15. Cecodap
16. Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello
17. Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos “P. Luis María Olasso”, Universidad Central de Venezuela
18. CEPAZ, Centro de Justicia y Paz
19. CIVILIS Derechos Humanos
20. CODEHCIU, Comisión de Derechos Humanos y Ciudadanía Guayana
21. CODHEZ, Comisión para los Derechos Humanos del Estado Zulia
22. Comisión de Justicia y Paz de la Conferencia Episcopal de Venezuela
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27. FENASOPADRES, Federación Nacional de Sociedades de Padres y Representantes
28. FEPAP, Fundación Ensayos para el Aprendizaje Permanente
29. FUCCAM, Fundación Falcón Unidos contra el Cáncer de Mama - Estado Falcón
30. Fundación Aguaclara
31. Fundacion CIIDER
32. Fundación Venezolana de Hipertensión Pulmonar
33. FUNDAMAMA – Estado Lara
34. Fundaquimio – Estado Carabobo
35. Fundaseno
36. FUNDIR, Fundación Isabel Rivas – Estado Carabobo
37. FUNPAZ, Asociación Civil Fuerza, Unión, Justicia, Solidaridad y Paz
38. FUNSAVIDA – Estado Barinas
39. FUNVIE, Fundación Venezolana de Ingeniería Ecológica
40. LabPaz, Laboratorio de Paz
41. MAVID, Manos amigas por la Vida
42. Movimiento Vinotinto
43. Nueva Esparta en Movimiento
44. Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad de Los Andes
45. Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones
46. Observatorio Venezolano de Salud
47. Padres Organizados de Venezuela
48. Pastoral de la Salud de la CEV
49. PROVEA, Programa Venezolano de Educación Acción en Derechos Humanos
50. REDHNNNA, Red por los Derechos Humanos de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes
51. Seno y Vida – Estado Táchira
52. Senos Saludables - Estado Bolívar
53. SENOSALUD
54. Sinergia, Asociación Venezolana de Organizaciones de Sociedad Civil
55. SOHI, Sociedad Hominis Iura
56. StopVIH – Estado Nueva Esparta
57. Transparencia Venezuela
58. Unión Afirmativa
59. Unión Vecinal para la Participación Ciudadana
60. Venezuela Diversa