

## Silence of UN Agencies in Venezuela affects the health, access to food and dignity of the most vulnerable

50 Venezuelan civil society organizations wish to express our indignation and rejection of the conduct and silence of several of the agencies of the United Nations System established in Venezuela, particularly PAHO, FAO and UNDP, in a context of a rapid increase of poverty levels, economic and social fragility and political and institutional instability, in which the population faces massive and severe shortages of food, medicines and medical supplies across the nation and the lack of internal capacity to solve this situation in the medium term. UNFPA and UNICEF have also opted for restricting their activities to the implementation of some programs, keeping away from this very serious situation, which primarily affects pregnant women, children and adolescents, the elderly, rural and indigenous communities, as well as persons deprived of liberty.

On Tuesday July 19, 2016, during the press conference held by the Information Service of the United Nations, its Director, Alessandra Vellucci, said the briefing on Venezuela on Friday 15 had been suspended “because colleagues from the different agencies did not have enough information for a full-fledged briefing”. Fadelia Chaib, of the World Health Organization (WHO), said that she “would check again with PAHO what action they were taking and what information they were receiving from the country. As soon as there would be more information, it was not excluded that WHO would brief the press on the topic”.

Since 2013, civil society organizations have sent information to these agencies and have even conducted peaceful protests in front of PAHO’s office in Caracas, drawing attention to the generalized failures in the provision of medicines, supplies and services. FAO has also been informed about the progressive deterioration in the nutritional status of the population, since 2012. Since March 1, 2016, the United Nations Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) is aware of the humanitarian nature of this crisis.

The UN agencies refrain from dialogue with Venezuelan society, without pressure or conditions by the State. This situation compromises their performance, according to the Action Plan "Rights up Front", which establishes their duty to prioritize, above the interests of states, the mandates and commitments on human rights and to provide accurate information regarding populations at risk or subjected to serious violations of human rights, to ensure coherent strategies for action on the ground, facilitating an early coordinated action and greater impact on the work of protecting the rights human and humanitarian law.

The health crisis affects 120 thousand people with complex conditions, 3 million with hypertension and diabetes, 90,000 with malaria —the majority of them indigenous and mine workers— and 60,000 with dengue. Maternal mortality increased from 66 cases per 100,000 in 2015 to 116 in 2016, according to official figures. In 2015, 12.1% (more than 3 million people) reported eating 2 times a day or less, and 87% reported not having enough money to buy food. In the first half of 2016, nutritional deficit reached 12% in urban areas, 19% in peri-urban areas, and 27% in poorer areas. In major hospitals in the country, cases of severe child malnutrition are reported, including diagnoses of marasmus and kwashiorkor.

In light of this situation, it is unacceptable that the briefing on Venezuela had to be suspended “because colleagues from the different agencies did not have enough information for a full-fledged briefing”; it is unacceptable and breaches the principles of “**rights up front**” that neither the OHCHR is receiving reliable and timely information from the UN agencies. What then are the Pan American Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the Population Fund, the Children's Fund and, in particular, the United Nations Development Programme doing in Venezuela?

After the suspension of the briefing on July 15 and what was expressed during the press conference on July 19, it seems undeniable that the agencies have not even informed their own headquarters on the crisis in Venezuela, a situation that endangers thousands of people, especially the most vulnerable.

The United Nations System cannot continue “failing to fulfill its responsibilities” in Venezuela, in order to be able to prevent irreparable consequences in terms of loss of life and further escalation of the deteriorating food and health conditions in the country, affecting the most vulnerable, if it does not implement, as quickly as possible, a mechanism of international cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

Acción Solidaria

Acción Solidaria  
ACCSI, Acción Ciudadana contra el Sida  
Amigos Trasplantados de Venezuela  
ASOVILUZ, Asociación Civil Vida y Luz  
Aula Abierta  
AVAL, Asociación Venezolana de Amigos Con Linfoma  
AVH, Asociación Venezolana para la Hemofilia  
Cáritas Ciudad Bolívar  
CECAVID, Centro de Educación y Capacitación para la Vida  
Centro de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Católica Andrés Bello  
Centro para la Paz y los Derechos Humanos de la Universidad Central de Venezuela  
CEPAZ, Centro de Justicia y Paz  
Civilis Derechos Humanos  
CODEVIDA, Coalición de Organizaciones por el Derecho a la Salud y la Vida  
CODHEZ, Comisión para los Derechos Humanos del Estado Zulia  
COFAVIC  
Convite AC  
Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela  
Espacio Público  
Excubitus  
FENASOPADRES, Federación Nacional de Sociedades de Padres y Representantes  
FEPAP, Fundación Ensayos para el Aprendizaje Permanente  
FUNCAMAMA  
Fundación Aguaclara  
Fundación Bengoa  
FUNPAZ, Asociación Civil Fuerza, Unión, Justicia, Solidaridad y Paz  
Futuro Presente  
GTAI, Grupo de Trabajo sobre Asuntos Indígenas de la Universidad de Los Andes  
INVESP, Instituto venezolano de Estudios Sociales y Políticos  
Justicia y Paz Cáritas Los Teques  
LabPaz, Laboratorio de Paz  
Movimiento Vino Tinto  
Observatorio de Derechos Humanos de la Universidad de Los Andes  
OVDHM, Observatorio Venezolano de Derechos Humanos de las Mujeres  
OVP, Observatorio Venezolano de Prisiones  
OVS, Observatorio Venezolano de Salud  
Padres Organizados de Venezuela  
PROVEA, Programa Venezolano de Educación Acción en Derechos Humanos  
Red Rosa  
REDAC, Red de Activistas Ciudadanos por los Derechos Humanos  
REDHNNNA, Red por los Derechos Humanos de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes  
Senos Ayuda  
Sinergia, Asociación Venezolana de Organizaciones de Sociedad Civil  
SOHI, Sociedad Hominis Iura  
Transparencia Venezuela  
Uniandes  
Unión Afirmativa  
Unión Vecinal para la Participación Ciudadana  
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