

Venezuela and the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Venezuela is a Latin American country, located in the northern part of South America, facing to the Caribbean Sea, with a population of 38 millions of people (National Institute of Statistics), however, due to the increase of poverty level during the last 20 years, Venezuela had suffered one of the biggest exodus in human history, just behind the Syrian exodus during the civil war. According to the United Nations (UN), Venezuelan emigration is close to 6 million people. Long before the economic sanctions by the USA and the pandemic the rapidly and progressive decay of the Venezuelan Health System had made necessary the declaration of a Complex Humanitarian Emergency by International Organizations.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic in Venezuela has not been as serious as in the rest of the countries of the region, the official data reported by August 22nd is 38.957 cases and 323 deaths. About 22% of those death are health personnel mainly Doctors. This unacceptable and scandalous number only reflects the unhuman conditions on which Venezuelan people are being subdued. Even further, all the health personnel, from doctors, nurses, and sanitary maintains work without the protective equipment

There are few to none gloves, waterproof gowns, masks. Our hospitals are usually without water service and simply things such as soap and disinfectants are scarce. Other areas of concern are the number of hospital beds. There was a deficit of 50% before the pandemic. According to the Health Minister, the public hospitals have 100 beds in the Intensive Care Units (ICU). The private hospitals add enough bed to reach an insufficient 300 beds for the whole country.

There is not a trustworthy official spokesperson to maintain people informed. On the other hand, a destroyed economy forces unprotected people to go to the streets trying to make a living. The way the news is treated by the leaders causes that some people believe that the pandemic is just a government invention to justify the shortage of fuel, of food, of medicine, of products to satisfy

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everyday needs. All these elements together have opened the door for the pandemic to take lives in a daily bases. All these happen under the indolent eyes of government official that has allowed the destruction of the Venezuelan Health System. None of the government official listen to the technical suggestions made by the National Academy of Medicine and other scientific societies, such as Venezuelan Society of Childcare and Pediatrics, establishing obsolete treatment protocols, which the WHO has already said that they have not worked in the treatment of COVID-19.

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