

COMPLEX HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY IN VENEZUELA

Guárico

Report 2019/2021

One of the five states that comprise the "llanos" region, Guárico is located in the center of the country. Its capital is San Juan de los Morros and the most populated city is Calabozo, also known since colonial times as "La Villa de Todos los Santos". It has 15 autonomous municipalities and 39 civil parishes, where 827,624 people live¹. With almost 65,000 km², it is the fourth largest state in Venezuela. In the mid-twentieth century a reservoir was built, with 230 km², one of the largest in Venezuela, destined for irrigation.

The Interdisciplinary Group to address the Complex Humanitarian Emergency in the state of Guárico², which participated in the elaboration of this report to treat the impact on human rights in the state between 2019 and 2021, highlighted as main problems of the entity the existence of people with chronic health conditions without the hospital centers having equipment for diagnosis and treatment, nor medicines. Teenage pregnancy is another of the most worrying problems from a social point of view. The lack of access to basic education and malfunction of public services, especially drinking water and sewage, also appear on the map, despite the fact that it is a state with abundant water resources.

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Severe failures in infrastructure, hygiene, equipment and supplies in public hospitals do not guarantee minimum health care

1. During 2021, at the Israel Ranuarez Balza Hospital, part of the ceiling fell on some of the hospitalized patients³. The Dr. Francisco Urdaneta Delgado Hospital, on the other hand, is a decaying, unhealthy center, where there is a shortage of cleaning implements, nebulizers and even blood pressure monitors. Although the operation rooms are active, there are no surgical kits, syringes, spinal needles, solutions, anesthesia, atropine or even sutures. People

have to bring all the supplies and materials in order to enter the hospital and, in general, they do not have enough economic resources to buy them⁴. Although there is an imaging center with a CT scanner, a densitometer, X-rays, MRI and some trained medical staff, the equipment is damaged due to lack of maintenance and poor temperature conditions.

2. Withdrawal of health personnel is increasing, because the salary is not enough to cover their basic needs⁵. Medical personnel are earning less than US\$100 per month. In addition, hospitals have closed their cafeterias due to lack of food and do not guarantee meals for their staff nor for hospitalized people. One doctor reported that she has reached the point of walking half an hour to get to her workplace because her salary does not allow her to pay the daily passage and cash in bolivars is scarce.

Massive withdrawal of health personnel due to very low salaries and precarious working conditions that endanger the lives of those who come to receive care

3. The medical specialists, residents and graduates are the first ones who had to leave the health centers to migrate abroad. Other doctors left for private medicine or were already working in clinics and simply did not go to public hospitals because the poor infrastructure, insecurity, and lack of supplies and medicines did not allow them to perform their work. Some medicines arrive through donations because the State has not provided them for several years. The risks of death in these conditions are very high, mainly the elderly die of heart attacks, respiratory arrest and severe migraine headaches due to lack of supplies, equipment and medicines.

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Deficiencies of supplies and unsanitary conditions are widespread in hospitals and ambulatory clinics in the state

4. In the hospitals of the state of Guárico, the deficiencies of supplies and equipment, and the unsanitary conditions are high. They lack cleaning implements, nebulizers and blood pressure monitors, as well as the minimum necessary to attend the people, who have nowhere to go, because the ambulatory clinics and the Integral Diagnostic Centers are in the same situation.

5. With these deficiencies, a total of 932 pregnant women were registered in 57 consulting rooms of the Dr. Francisco Delgado Hospital, 203 of whom were at high obstetric risk due to malnutrition problems. There are cases of congenital malformations due to contamination of organic matter and use of pesticides. A high number of nursing mothers have anemia. Teenage pregnancies have become a common problem, as a sign of the extreme poverty in which most households find themselves.

Health problems in pregnant women due to malnutrition and early pregnancy are signs of extreme poverty

Chronic diseases are on the rise and there is no capacity to care for all of them in health centers

6. These deficiencies in the hospital also affect 684 people with hypertension, 478 with diabetes, 398 with bronchial asthma, 132 with heart disease, 231 with motor disabilities, 45 with schizophrenia and 92 with Down syndrome. The medical equipment for the care of people with oncological problems is not maintained, and the number of women with cervical, breast and soft tissue

cancer has increased. The oncology unit of San Juan de los Morros is collapsed. People who cannot be attended are resigned to die without treatment^{6 7}. The government dismantled the Dialysis Unit in the Hospital of Calabozo and placed it in Valle de La Pascua. Many people who are unable to travel have died because they have been treated at home, without adequate hygienic conditions. Although the Hospital of the Venezuelan Institute

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of Social Security (IVSS) has a dialysis unit, it also lacks supplies to wash the machines, they use chlorine and a number of people have died from this cause.

7. Education is in a critical situation. In the municipality of Miranda there are 325 elementary and middle schools with a highly deteriorated infrastructure and a shortage of desks and other furniture, such as blackboards, markers and teaching materials. Teachers and workers have withdrawn from the schools because they do not have sufficient salaries to cover their needs and are engaged in other work. Teachers are persecuted for demanding their rights and denouncing the poor state of the schools⁸. The universities located in the state are going through a similar situation of lack of qualified teachers due to low salaries and an increasingly deteriorated infrastructure.

Basic education and university campuses are also affected by a very deteriorated infrastructure and deficits in furniture and materials

Lack of water is a widespread problem and there are no water purification processes available. Frequent power outages aggravate water shortages

8. The lack of drinking water is a general problem throughout the state⁹ and potable water is not available. It affects not only homes and communities, but also schools and health centers, to which it is not possible to pump it. The only municipality with moderately sufficient water is Calabozo¹⁰. Only 25% of the state's population has water, but the flow is not constant. There are a gravity and a pumping network, but only the one that flows by gravity works. At least 10 thousand families from different areas

in San Juan de los Morros (Callejón Xiomara, 3 de Julio, Bicentenario, Nuevo Progreso, Esequiel Zamora, Primero de Mayo, Fidel Castro, Mahomo, Jesús Bandres and Brisas del Pariapan) face recurrent failures in the distribution of water by pipeline and only have one water tank to supply 10 communities in the city¹¹. The affected inhabitants have stated that they only receive water for three hours and that due to the deterioration of the pipelines, the higher areas do not receive it. In addition to pipeline failures, there is no investment in new water systems, which makes it difficult to meet the demand. Electrical failures, which are constant¹², also interrupt the water service that arrives by pumping.

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Tower 330, which is on the slope of the dam, is about to fall, and this would leave part of the state without electricity¹³.

9. In many areas of Guárico there is no infrastructure to discharge sewage. There are no stabilization ponds to treat wastewater and this contributes to the contamination of water bodies. Especially in schools, there is a severe sanitation problem due to the lack of sewage services.

Gasoline shortages returned with long lines that can last for several days for people who can only afford to pay subsidized prices

10. There are also serious fuel supply problems. Gasoline lines are back¹⁴ and, there are not enough public transportation units to provide this service to the population¹⁵. In the municipality of Juan Germán Roscio Nieves there are two gas stations that sell gasoline at dollarized prices and they are not always supplied¹⁶. Most people cannot afford these prices due to lack of income and must queue for four to five days at the stations that sell gasoline at subsidized prices.

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