**PUBLIC LETTER**

**Civil Society working on HIV and AIDS demand from Venezuelan Minister of Health Carlos Alvarado**

**THE RELEASE AND DELIVERY OF ANTIRETROVIRALS FOR PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV IN VENEZUELA**

Venezuela, 4 February 2019

**Dr. Carlos Alvarado**

**Ministro del Poder Popular para la Salud (MPPS)**

(Minister of Health)

Venezuelan civil society organizations working on HIV are writing to you to demand your URGENT INTERVENTION in the release and delivery of antiretroviral medicines that will save the lives of more than 70,000 people living with HIV and AIDS in Venezuela.

In addition, we urgently request you to initiate an investigation that identifies the factors that are hindering the implementation of the *Master Plan for strengthening the response to HIV, tuberculosis and malaria in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from a public health perspective*, considered as the only health roadmap in the country. The Plan contributes to mitigating the impact of the complex humanitarian emergency suffered by the Venezuelan population affected by the three diseases, in a responsible, organized, articulated and transparent manner

Currently there are **millions and millions of pills of antiretroviral drugs are stored and withheld without justification in the Jipana** warehouse, located inside the military facilities of the Guaicaipuro Fort, Charallave, Miranda state. **100% of these medicines were donated in 2018 and 2019 to people with HIV and AIDS in Venezuela** by prestigious international institutions such as AID FOR AIDS, Global Fund to fight AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria, UNICEF and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

It is urgent and necessary that you **INVESTIGATE the causes of this denial of access** to medical treatment. The treatments currently withheld are necessary to maintain the health and lives of thousands of girls, boys, adolescents, pregnant women, men and women of all the ages living with HIV, especially those that are more vulnerable, such as people living with HIV in poverty.

The ARVs that are currently withheld without any justification are: Viraday 1 (Efavirenz + Emtricitabina + Tenofovir), Viraday 2 (Efavirenz + Lamivudine + Tenofovir), Darunavir, Lamivudine, Kaletra (Lopinavir + Ritonavir), Duovir (Lamivudine + Zidovudine), Kivexa (Abacavir + Lamivudine), Zidovudine, Trixivir (Abacavir + Lamivudine + Zidovudine), Anzavir-R (Atazanavir + Ritonavir), Efavirenz, Truvada (Tenofovir + Emtricitabine), y several antiretrovirals for children living with HIV, including Abacavir (oral solution).

There are also 164,800 bottles of the combined antiretroviral drug Tenofovir + Lamivudine + Dolutegravir (TLD), which arrived on January 14, 2019 in a first batch of 100 thousand bottles and the second batch of 64,800 bottles arrived on January 25, 2019. The TLD was donated by the Global Fund to fight AIDS, TB and malaria and forms part of a set of agreements contained in the Master Plan signed by several key actors, including the Ministry of Health

In the event to receive the first batch of the antiretroviral TLD, the Deputy Minister of Salud de Redes Colectivas (Health of Collective Networks) Marisela Bermudez publicly told the media that they would send the antiretrovirals to the regions within 15 days to be delivered to people living with HIV. This is evidenced by the following VIDEO 1  <https://youtu.be/0lLg_9IwlQo> y VIDEO 2  <https://youtu.be/KhP-7yfcmnE>

The same was promised by other officials within the Ministry of Health in meetings held with representatives of the Venezuelan Network of Positive People (RVG+), the Venezuelan Society of Infectious Diseases, PAHO and UNAIDS. **But the official promise was not fulfilled, since more than 20 days have passed and the antiretrovirals have not yet been delivered, due to the evident internal weaknesses of the technical and administrative levels of the Ministry of Health that you direct**. Meanwhile, hundreds of people with AIDS are dying in their homes and hospitals, and others living with HIV, in poor health condition, are treated with serious difficulties in hospitalization rooms in public health centers for the total absence of antiretrovirals, other types of medicines, equipment, supplies and basic clinical supplies.

The few recognized HIV specialists who work in the different public health centers who decided to stay in Venezuela, express concern and despair about the progressive deterioration of their patients living with HIV and AIDS. **Our doctors are waiting for the Ministry of Health to send antiretrovirals to be able to make clinical decisions that allow initiating and changing antiretroviral treatments, with the aim of saving the lives of their patients: people living with HIV and AIDS.** These clinical decisions will be based on what is established in the new "Practical Guide for Antiretroviral Treatments for People living with HIV in Venezuela", prepared by the best experts of the Venezuelan Infectious Disease Society, and following the new recommendations of the World Health Organization for the use of antiretrovirals for the treatment of HIV (2018), and which has already obtained the approval of the Ministry of Health.

Mr. Minister Alvarado: all the key stakeholders are doing their job, **only the Ministry of Health needs to fulfill its obligations**

**People living with HIV cannot wait any longer #ANTIRETROVIRALSNOW**

Signatories to this public letter are the following civil society organizations:

* Red Venezolana de Gente Positiva (RVG+)
* Acción por la Vida Dr. Miguel Ángel De Lima, Caracas
* Acción Solidaria, Caracas
* ACCSI Acción Ciudadana Contra el SIDA, Caracas
* AID FOR AIDS Venezuela, estado Miranda
* Alianza Colectiva Contra el VIH (ACOVIH), estado Portuguesa
* Amigos por la Vida, estado Aragua
* Asociación Civil Impulso Vital Aragua (ACIVA), estado Aragua
* Asociación Civil Manantial de Vida Pro Defensa de los Derechos Humanos (AMAVIDA), estado Zulia
* Asociación Civil Mujeres por la Vida (ASOMUVI), estado Portuguesa
* Asociación de Derechos Humanos Amigos de Margarita (ADHAM), estado Nueva Esparta
* Asociación por la Vida (ASOVIDA), estado Mérida
* Acción Zuliana por la Vida (AZUL+), estado Zulia
* Cátedra de la Paz / Universidad de Los Andes, estado Mérida
* Coalición de ONGs de VIH del Interior del País (COVIP)
* Conciencia por la Vida, estado Lara
* Fundación Arcoiris por la Vida, estado Miranda
* Fundación MAVID, estado Carabobo
* Fundación Niños en Positivo, estado Mérida
* Fundación Nueva Vida, estado Cojedes
* Fundación Renacer Guanare, estado Portuguesa
* Fundación SIDA Región Táchira (FUNDASIDARTA), estado Táchira
* Fundación Isamar, estado Sucre
* FUNDAPEMA, estado Apure
* Gran Familia de la Salud, estado Bolívar
* Huellas en Positivo, estado Barinas
* Lara en Positivo, estado Lara
* Liga Merideña de lucha contra el SIDA, estado Mérida
* Positivos en Colectivo, Caracas
* Sociedad Wills Wilde, estado Mérida
* Stop VIH, estado Nueva Esparta