HIV Situation Is “Critical” in Venezuela as Military Withholds Meds

“We are scared for the safety of our activists and call upon the global community to help the people of Venezuela living with HIV.”

February 19, 2019 By Trent Straube

Venezuelans with HIV are dying because they can’t access antiretroviral meds—despite the fact that 300,000 bottles of the drugs have been shipped to the country since the end of December. The lifesaving treatment sits in a warehouse on a military base, reports the Washington Blade, because the Venezuelan government claims it doesn’t have working trucks to distribute the meds.

“The situation is critical and alarming,” César Sequera, the founder of a Venezuelan LGBTI advocacy group, told the Blade, which interviewed several advocates and people living with HIV in Venezuela.

“Apparently [President Nicolás] Maduro is blocking $5 million Global Fund shipment of HIV & AIDS medicine from entering #Venezuela,” tweeted U.S. Congressman Marco Rubio about the situation. “This is a death sentence to those who depend on anti-virals for survival. Military leaders who cooperate with this sadistic tactic will be as guilty of them as Maduro.”

What’s more, in a related but separate article, the Blade reports that Venezuelan police raided the offices of an HIV/AIDS service organization in Valencia. The police seized HIV meds and infant formula and arrested three human rights activists working at the organization.

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— Marco Rubio (@marcorubio) February 6, 2019

“We are scared for the safety of our activists and call upon the global community to help us—not just us, but the people of Venezuela living with HIV,” said Alberto Nieves, executive director of Acción Ciudadana Contra el SIDA, a Venezuelan HIV/AIDS service organization, in a press release from the International Council for AIDS Service Organizations as reported in the Blade.

Despite being a wealthy country because of its oil reserves, Venezuela has been in the midst of a worsening political and humanitarian crises for the past several years.

For related stories in POZ, read “‘Grave Concern’ for People Living With HIV in Venezuela,” “Unable to Get Meds, Venezuelans With HIV Turn to Guásimo” and “AIDS Threatens Indigenous People of Venezuela.”

Plus, read “Beyond Ourselves,” a profile on Venezuelan native Jesús Aguais. He founded Aid for AIDS, which helps provide recycled HIV meds to people in 43 countries around the world. For more, visit AidForAIDS.org.

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